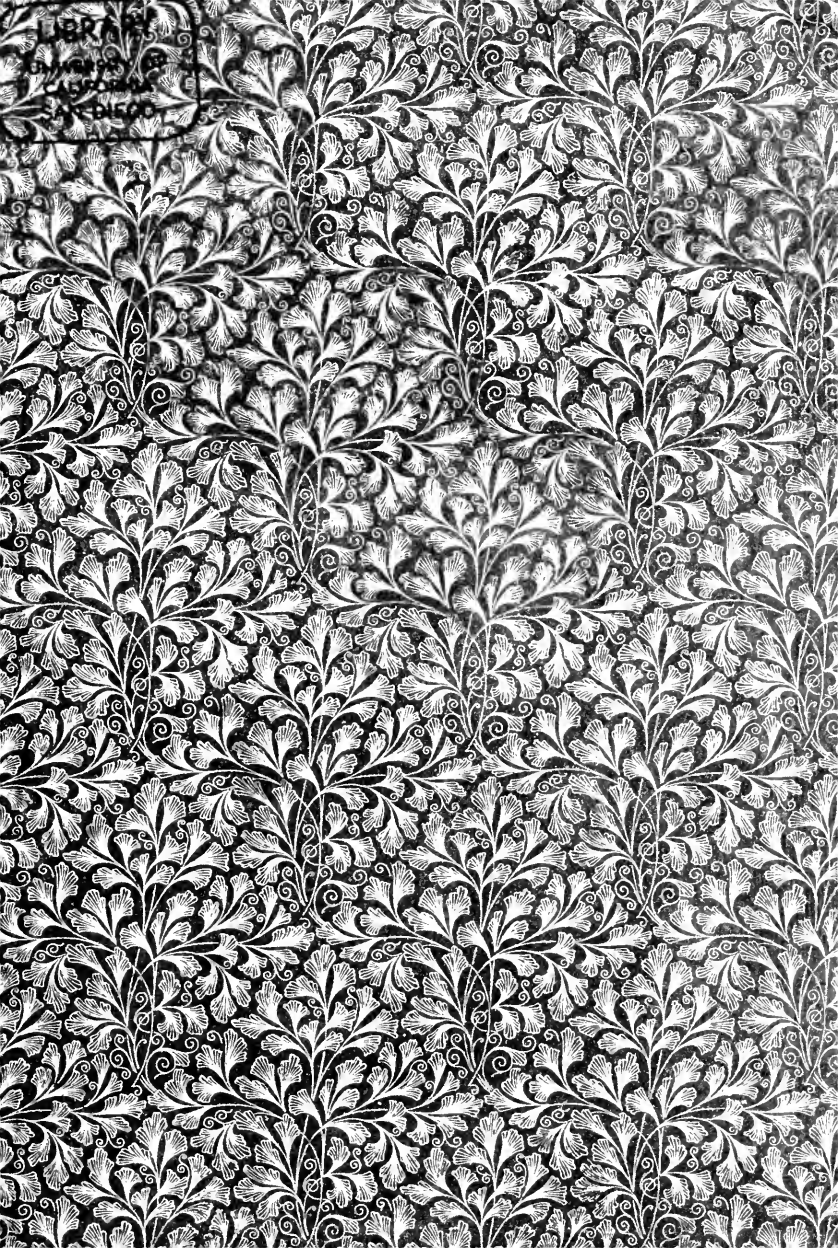
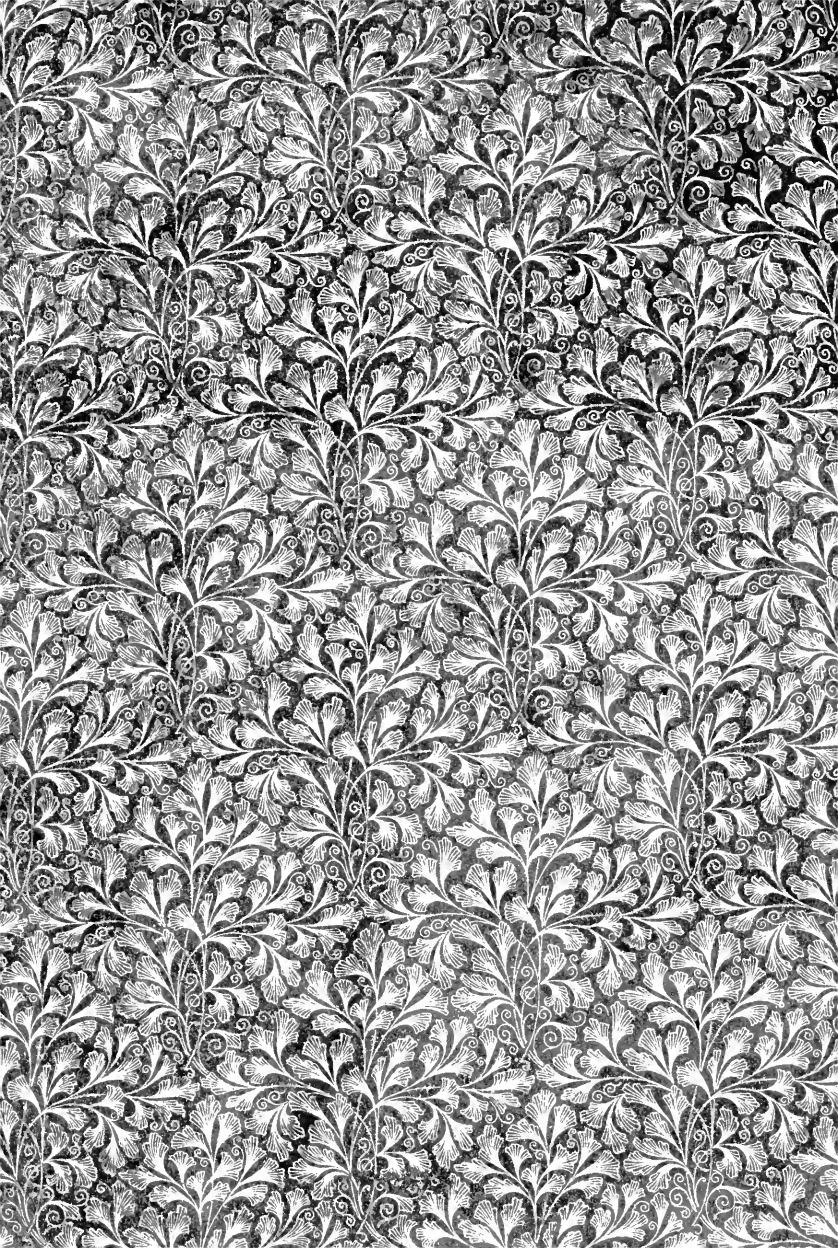


LYRICS

AND IOYLLS









MR. STEDMAN'S WRITINGS.

I.

**LYRICS AND IDYLLS, WITH OTHER
POEMS.** Selected by the Author from the latest Collective
Edition.

II.

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To/ Dr. Chas. Henry Pedman
his, very favorite edition,
with the cordials regards of
E. C. Pedman.

Oct.
1870

LYRICS AND IDYLLS

20345

LYRICS AND IDYLLS

WITH OTHER POEMS

BY

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN



LONDON

C. KEGAN PAUL & CO., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1879

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE.



THIS book is compiled from the latest American editions of the author's volumes. These originally appeared with the following titles and dates: "Lyrics and Idylls," 1860; "Alice of Monmouth, with other Poems," 1864; "The Blameless Prince, and other Poems," 1869; "Poetical Works," 1874; "Hawthorne, and other Poems," 1877. At the publisher's request, Mr. Stedman has selected for this edition those poems which he desires to set before the English public. They are grouped without reference to their respective dates of composition.



AD VATEM.

WHITTIER ! the Land that loves thee, she whose child
Thou art,—and whose uplifted hands thou long
Hast stayed with song availing like a prayer,—
She feels a sudden pang, who gave thee birth,
And gave to thee the lineaments supreme
Of her own freedom, that she could not make
Thy tissues all immortal, or, if to change,
To bloom through years coeval with her own ;
So that no touch of age nor frost of time
Should wither thee, nor furrow thy dear face,
Nor fleck thy hair with silver. Ay, she feels
A double pang that thee, with each new year,
Glad Youth may not revisit, like the Spring
That routs her northern Winter and anew
Melts off the hoar snow from her puissant hills.
She could not make thee deathless : no, but thou,
Thou sangest her always in abiding verse,
And hast thy fame immortal—as we say
Immortal in this Earth that yet must die,
And in this land now fairest and most young
Of all fair lands that yet must perish with it.
Thy words shall last ; albeit thou growest old,
Men say ; but never old the poet's soul
Becomes ; only its covering takes on
A reverend splendour, as in the misty fall
Thine own auroral forests, ere at last

Passes the spirit of the wooded dell.
And stay thou with us long ! vouchsafe us long
This brave autumnal presence, ere the hues
Slow fading,—ere the quaver of thy voice,
The twilight of thine eye, move men to ask
Where hides the chariot,—in what sunset vale,
Beyond thy chosen river, champ the steeds
That wait to bear thee skyward ? Since we too
Would feign thee, in our tenderness, to be
Inviolatè, excepted from thy kind,
And that our bard and prophet best-belovèd
Shall vanish like that other : him that stood
Undaunted in the pleasure-house of kings,
And unto kings and crowned harlots spake
God's truth and judgment. At his sacred feet
Far followed all the lesser men of old
Whose lips were touched with fire, and caught from him
The gift of prophecy ; and thus from thee,
Whittier, the younger singers,—whom thou seest
Each emulous to be thy staff this day,—
What learned they ? righteous anger, burning scorn
Of the oppressor, love to humankind,
Sweet fealty to country and to home,
Peace, stainless purity, high thoughts of heaven,
And the clear, natural music of thy song.

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AMERICAN
LYRICS AND IDYLLS.

THE HEART OF NEW ENGLAND.

O LONG are years of waiting, when lovers' hearts
are bound
By words that hold in life and death, and last the
half-world round ;
Long, long for him who wanders far and strives
with all his main,
But crueller yet for her who bides at home and
hides her pain !
And lone are the homes of New England.

'Twas in the mellow summer I heard her sweet
reply ;
The barefoot lads and lasses a-berrying went by ;
The locust dinned amid the trees ; the fields were
high with corn ;
The white-sailed clouds against the sky like ships
were onward borne :
And blue are the skies of New England.

Her lips were like the raspberries ; her cheek was
soft and fair,
And little breezes stopped to lift the tangle of her
hair ;
A light was in her hazel eyes, and she was nothing
loth
To hear the words her lover spoke, and pledged me
there her troth ;
And true is the word of New England.

When September brought the golden-rod, and
maples burned like fire,
And bluer than in August rose the village smoke
and higher,
And large and red among the stacks the ripened
pumpkins shone,—
One hour, in which to say farewell, was left to us
alone ;
And sweet are the lanes of New England.

We loved each other truly ! hard, hard it was to
part ;
But my ring was on her finger, and her hair lay
next my heart.
“ ’Tis but a year, my darling,” I said ; “ in one short
year,
When our Western home is ready, I shall seek my
Katie here ; ”
And brave is the hope of New England.

I went to gain a home for her, and in the Golden
State
With head and hand I planned and toiled, and early
worked and late ;
But luck was all against me, and sickness on me
lay,
And ere I got my strength again ’twas many a
weary day ;
And long are the thoughts of New England.

And many a day, and many a month, and thrice
the rolling year,
I bravely strove, and still the goal seemed never
yet more near.

My Katie's letters told me that she kept her promise
true,
But now, for very hopelessness, my own to her were
few ;
And stern is the pride of New England.

But still she trusted in me, though sick with hope
deferred ;
No more among the village choir her voice was
sweetest heard ;
For when the wild north-easter of the fourth long
winter blew,
So thin her frame with pining, the cold wind pierced
her through ;
And chill are the blasts of New England.

At last my fortunes bettered, on the far Pacific shore,
And I thought to see old Windham and my patient
love once more ;
When a kinsman's letter reached me : " Come at
once, or come too late !
Your Katie's strength is failing ; if you love her, do
not wait :
Come back to the elms of New England."

Oh, it wrung my heart with sorrow ! I left all else
behind,
And straight for dear New England I speeded like
the wind.
The day and night were blended till I reached my
boyhood's home,
And the old cliffs seemed to mock me that I had
not sooner come ;
And gray are the rocks of New England.

I could not think 'twas Katie, who sat before me
there
Reading her Bible—'twas my gift—and pillowed in
her chair.
A ring, with all my letters, lay on a little stand,—
She could no longer wear it, so frail her poor, white
hand !
But strong is the love of New England.

Her hair had lost its tangle and was parted off her
brow ;
She used to be a joyous girl,—but seemed an angel
now,—
Heaven's darling, mine no longer ; yet in her hazel
eyes
The same dear love-light glistened, as she soothed
my bitter cries :
And pure is the faith of New England.

A month I watched her dying, pale, pale as any
rose
That drops its petals one by one and sweetens as it
goes.
My life was darkened when at last her large eyes
closed in death,
And I heard my own name whispered as she drew
her parting breath ;
Still, still was the heart of New England.

It was a woeful funeral the coming Sabbath-day ;
We bore her to the barren hill on which the grave-
yard lay,

And when the narrow grave was filled, and what we
might was done,
Of all the stricken group around I was the loneliest
one ;
And drear are the hills of New England.

I gazed upon the stunted pines, the bleak November
sky,
And knew that buried deep with her my heart
henceforth would lie ;
And waking in the solemn nights my thoughts still
thither go
To Katie, lying in her grave beneath the winter
snow ;
And cold are the snows of New England.

THE DOORSTEP.

THE conference-meeting through at last,
We boys around the vestry waited
To see the girls come tripping past
Like snow-birds willing to be mated.

Not braver he that leaps the wall
By level musket-flashes litten,
Than I,—to step before them all
Who longed to see me get the mitten.

But no, she blushed and took my arm !
We let the old folks have the highway,
And started toward the Maple Farm
Along a kind of lovers' byway.

I can't remember what we said,
'Twas nothing worth a song or story ;
Yet that rude path by which we sped
Seemed all transformed and in a glory.

The snow was crisp beneath our feet,
The moon was full, the fields were gleaming ;
By hood and tippet sheltered sweet,
Her face with youth and health was beaming.

The little hand outside her muff.—
O sculptor, if you could but mould it !—
So lightly touched my jacket-cuff,
To keep it warm I had to hold it.

To have her with me there alone,—
'Twas love and fear and triumph blended.
At last we reached the foot-worn stone
Where that delicious journey ended.

The old folks, too, were almost home ;
Her dimpled hand the latches fingered,
We heard the voices nearer come,
Yet on the doorstep still we lingered.

She shook her ringlets from her hood,
And with a "Thank you, Ned," dissembled,
But yet I knew she understood
With what a daring wish I trembled.

A cloud passed kindly overhead,
The moon was slyly peeping through it,
Yet hid its face, as if it said,
"Come, now or never ! do it ! *do it !* "

My lips till then had only known
The kiss of mother and of sister,
But somehow, full upon her own
Sweet, rosy, darling mouth,—I kissed her !

Perhaps 'twas boyish love, yet still,
O listless woman, weary lover !
To feel once more that fresh, wild thrill
I'd give—but who can live youth over ?

SEEKING THE MAYFLOWER.

THE sweetest sound our whole year round—
'Tis the first robin of the spring !
The song of the full orchard choir
Is not so fine a thing.

Glad sights are common : Nature draws
Her random pictures through the year,
But oft her music bids us long
Remember those most dear.

To me, when in the sudden spring
I hear the earliest robin's lay,
With the first trill there comes again
One picture of the May.

The veil is parted wide, and lo,
A moment, though my eyelids close,
Once more I see that wooded hill
Where the arbútus grows.

I see the village dryad kneel,
Trailing her slender fingers through
The knotted tendrils, as she lifts
Their pink, pale flowers to view.

Once more I dare to stoop beside
The dove-eyed beauty of my choice,
And long to touch her careless hair,
And think how dear her voice.

My eager, wandering hands assist
With fragrant blooms her lap to fill,
And half by chance they meet her own,
Half by our young hearts' will.

Till, at the last, those blossoms won,—
Like her, so pure, so sweet, so shy,—
Upon the gray and lichened rocks
Close at her feet I lie.

Fresh blows the breeze through hemlock-trees,
The fields are edged with green below ;
And naught but youth and hope and love
We know or care to know !

Hark ! from the moss-clung apple-bough,
Beyond the tumbled wall, there broke
That gurgling music of the May,—
'Twas the first robin spoke !

I heard it, ay, and heard it not,—
For little then my glad heart wist
What toil and time should come to pass,
And what delight be missed ;

Nor thought thereafter, year by year
Hearing that fresh yet olden song,
To yearn for unreturning joys
That with its joy belong.

THE LORD'S-DAY GALE.

BAY ST. LAWRENCE, AUGUST, 1873.

IN Gloucester port lie fishing craft,—
More stanch and trim were never seen :
They are sharp before and sheer abaft,
And true their lines the masts between.
Along the wharves of Gloucester Town
Their fares are lightly handed down,
And the laden flakes to sunward lean.

Well know the men each cruising-ground,
And where the cod and mackerel be ;
Old Eastern Point the schooners round
And leave Cape Ann on the larboard lee :
Sound are the planks, the hearts are bold,
That brave December's surges cold
On Georges' shoals in the outer sea.

And some must sail to the banks far north
And set their trawls for the hungry cod,—
In the ghostly fog creep back and forth
By shrouded paths no foot hath trod ;
Upon the crews the ice-winds blow,
The bitter sleet, the frozen snow,—
Their lives are in the hand of God !

New England ! New England !

Needs sail they must, so brave and poor,
Or June be warm or Winter storm,

Lest a wolf gnaw through the cottage-door !
Three weeks at home, three long months gone,
While the patient goodwives sleep alone,
And wake to hear the breakers roar.

The Grand Bank gathers in its dead,—

The deep sea-sand is their winding-sheet ;
Who does not Georges' billows dread
That dash together the drifting fleet ?
Who does not long to hear, in May,
The pleasant wash of Saint Lawrence Bay,
The fairest ground where fishermen meet ?

There the west wave holds the red sunlight

Till the bells at home are rung for nine :
Short, short the watch, and calm the night ;
The fiery northern streamers shine ;
The eastern sky anon is gold,
And winds from piny forests old
Scatter the white mists off the brine.

The Province craft with ours at morn

Are mingled when the vapours shift ;
All day, by breeze and current borne,
Across the bay the sailors drift ;
With toll and seine its wealth they win,—
The dappled, silvery spoil come in
Fast as their hands can haul and lift.

New England ! New England !

Thou lovest well thine ocean main !

It spreadeth its locks among thy rocks,
And long against thy heart hath lain ;
Thy ships upon its bosom ride
And feel the heaving of its tide :
To thee its secret speech is plain.

Cape Breton and Edward Isle between,
In strait and gulf the schooners lay ;
The sea was all at peace, I ween,
The night before that August day ;
Was never a Gloucester skipper there,
But thought erelong, with a right good fare,
To sail for home from Saint Lawrence Bay.

New England ! New England !
Thy giant's love was turned to hate !
The winds control his fickle soul,
And in his wrath he hath no mate.
Thy shores his angry scourges tear,
And for thy children in his care
The sudden tempests lie in wait.

The East Wind gathered all unknown,—
A thick sea-cloud his course before ;
He left by night the frozen zone
And smote the cliffs of Labrador ;
He lashed the coasts on either hand,
And betwixt the Cape and Newfoundland
Into the Bay his armies pour.

He caught our helpless cruisers there
As a gray wolf harries the huddling fold ;
A sleet—a darkness—filled the air,
A shuddering wave before it rolled :

That Lord's-Day morn it was a breeze,—
At noon, a blast that shook the seas,—
At night—a wind of Death took hold !

It leapt across the Breton bar,
A death-wind from the stormy East !
It scarred the land, and whirled afar
The sheltering thatch of man and beast ;
It mingled rick and roof and tree,
And like a besom swept the sea,
And churned the waters into yeast.

From Saint Paul's light to Edward Isle
A thousand craft it smote amain ;
And some against it strove the while,
And more to make a port were fain :
The mackerel-gulls flew screaming past,
And the stick that bent to the noonday blast
Was split by the sundown hurricane.

Woe, woe to those whom the islands pen !
In vain they shun the double capes :
Cruel are the reefs of Magdalen ;
The Wolf's white fang what prey escapes ?
The Grin'stone grinds the bones of some,
And Coffin Isle is craped with foam ;—
On Deadman's shore are fearful shapes !

Oh, what can live on the open sea,
Or moored in port the gale outside ?
The very craft that at anchor be
Are dragged along by the swollen tide !
The great storm-wave came rolling west,
And tossed the vessels on its crest ;
The ancient bounds its might defied !

The ebb to check it had no power ;
The surf ran up an untold height ;
It rose, nor yielded, hour by hour,
A night and day, a day and night ;
Far up the seething shores it cast
The wrecks of hull and spar and mast,
The strangled crews,—a woeful sight !

There were twenty and more of Breton sail
Fast anchored on one mooring-ground ;
Each lay within his neighbour's hail,
When the thick of the tempest closed them
round :
All sank at once in the gaping sea,—
Somewhere on the shoals their corpses be,
The foundered hulks, and the seamen drowned.

On reef and bar our schooners drove
Before the wind, before the swell ;
By the steep sand-cliffs their ribs were stove,—
Long, long, their crews the tale shall tell !
Of the Gloucester fleet are wrecks threescore ;
Of the Province sail two hundred more
Were stranded in that tempest fell.

The bedtime bells in Gloucester Town
That Sabbath night rang soft and clear ;
The sailors' children laid them down,—
Dear Lord ! their sweet prayers couldst thou
hear ?
'Tis said that gently blew the winds ;
The goodwives, through the seaward blinds,
Looked down the bay and had no fear.

New England ! New England !

Thy ports their dauntless seamen mourn ;
The twin capes yearn for their return
Who never shall be thither borne ;
Their orphans whisper as they meet ;
The homes are dark in many a street,
And women move in weeds forlorn.

And wilt thou quail, and dost thou fear ?

Ah, no ! though widows' cheeks are pale,
The lads shall say : " Another year,
And we shall be of age to sail ! "
And the mothers' hearts shall fill with pride,
Though tears drop fast for them who died
When the fleet was wrecked in the Lord's-Day
gale.

THE OLD LOVE AND THE NEW.

ONCE more on the fallow hillside, as of old, I
lie at rest
For an hour, while the sunshine trembles through
the walnut-tree to the west,—
Gleams on the rocks and fragrant ferns, and the
berry bushes around ;
And I watch, as of old, the cattle graze in the lower
pasture-ground.

Of the Saxon months of blossom, when the merle
and mavis sing,
And a dust of gold falls everywhere from the soft
midsummer's wing,

I only know from my poets, or from pictures that
hither come,
Sweet with the smile of the hawthorn-hedge and the
hope of the harvest-home.

But July in our own New England—I bask myself
in its prime,
As one in the light of a face he loves, and has not
seen for a time !
Again the perfect blue of the sky ; the fresh green
woods ; the call
Of the crested jay ; the tangled vines that cover the
frost-thrown wall :

Sounds and shadows remembered well ! the ground-
bee's droning hum ;
The distant musical tree-tops ; the locust beating
his drum ;
And the ripened July warmth, that seems akin to a
fire which stole,
Long summers since, through the thews of youth,
to soften and harden my soul.

Here it was that I loved her—as only a stripling
can
Who doats on a girl that others know no mate for
the future man ;
It was well, perchance, that at last my pride and
honour outgrew her art,
That there came an hour, when from broken chains
I fled—with a broken heart.

'Twas well : but the fire would still flash up in
sharp, heat-lightning gleams,
And ever at night the false, fair face shone into
passionate dreams ;
The false, fair form, through many a year, was
somewhere close at my side,
And crept, as by right, to my very arms and the
place of my patient bride.

Bride and vision have passed away, and I am again
alone ;
Changed by years ; not wiser, I think, but only
different grown :
Not so much nearer wisdom is a man than a boy,
forsooth,
Though, in scorn of what has come and gone, he
hates the ways of his youth.

In seven years, I have heard it said, a soul shall
change its frame ;
Atom for atom, the man shall be the same, yet not
the same ;
The last of the ancient ichor shall pass away from
his veins,
And a new-born light shall fill the eyes whose
earlier lustre wanes.

In seven years, it is written, a man shall shift his
mood ;
Good shall seem what was evil, and evil the thing
that was good :
Ye that welcome the coming and speed the parting
guest,
Tell me, O winds of summer ! am I not half-con-
fest ?

For along the tide of this mellow month new fancies
guide my helm,
Another form has entered my heart as rightful
queen of the realm ;
From under their long black lashes new eyes—half-
blue, half-gray—
Pierce through my soul, to drive the ghost of the old
love quite away.

Shadow of years ! at last it sinks in the sepulchre of
the past,—
A gentle image and fair to see ; but was my passion
so vast ?
“ For you,” I said, “ be you false or true, are ever
life of my life ! ”
Was it myself or another who spoke, and asked her
to be his wife ?

For here, on the dear old hillside, I lie at rest
again,
And think with a quiet self-content of all the pas-
sion and pain,
Of the strong resolve and the after-strife ; but the
vistas round me seem
So little changed that I hardly know if the past is
not a dream.

Can I have sailed, for seven years, far out in the
open world ;
Have tacked and drifted here and there, by eddying
currents whirled ;
Have gained and lost, and found again ; and now,
for a respite, come
Once more to the happy scenes of old, and the
haven I voyaged from ?

Blended, infinite murmurs of True Love's earliest
song,
Where are you slumbering out of the heart that
gave you echoes so long?
But chords that have ceased to vibrate the swell of
an ancient strain
May thrill with a soulful music when rightly touched
again.

Rock and forest and meadow,—landscape perfect
and true !
Oh, if ourselves were tender and all unchangeable as
you,
I should not now be dreaming of seven years that
have been,
Nor bidding old love good-bye for ever, and letting
the new love in !

FUIT ILIUM.

ONE by one they died,—
Last of all their race ;
Nothing left but pride,
Lace, and buckled hose.
Their quietus made,
On their dwelling-place
Ruthless hands are laid :
Down the old house goes !

See the ancient manse
 Meet its fate at last !
Time, in his advance,
 Age nor honour knows ;
Axe and broadaxe fall,
 Lopping off the Past :
Hit with bar and maul,
 Down the old house goes !

Sevenscore years it stood :
 Yes, they built it well,
Though they built of wood,
 When that house arose.
For its cross-beams square
 Oak and walnut fell ;
Little worse for wear,
 Down the old house goes !

Rending board and plank,
 Men with crowbars ply,
Opening fissures dank,
 Striking deadly blows.
From the gabled roof
 How the shingles fly !
Keep you here aloof,—
 Down the old house goes !

Holding still its place,
 There the chimney stands,
Stanch from top to base,
 Frowning on its foes.
Heave apart the stones,
 Burst its iron bands !
How it shakes and groans !
 Down the old house goes !

Round the mantelpiece
Glisten Scripture tiles ;
Henceforth they shall cease
Painting Egypt's woes,
Painting David's fight,
Fair Bathsheba's smiles,
Blinded Samson's might,—
Down the old house goes !

On these oaken floors
High-shoed ladies trod ;
Through those panelled doors
Trailed their furbelows ;
Long their day has ceased ;
Now, beneath the sod,
With the worms they feast,—
Down the old house goes !

Many a bride has stood
In yon spacious room ;
Here her hand was wooed
Underneath the rose ;
O'er that sill the dead
Reached the family tomb :
All, that were, have fled,—
Down the old house goes !

Once, in yonder hall,
Washington, they say,
Led the New-Year's ball,
Stateliest of beaux.
Oh that minuet,
Maids and matrons gay !
Are there such sights yet ?
Down the old house goes !

British troopers came
 Ere another year,
 With their coats aflame,
 Mincing on their toes ;
 Daughters of the house
 Gave them haughty cheer,
 Laughed to scorn their vows, —
 Down the old house goes !

Doorway high the box
 In the grass-plot spreads ;
 It has borne its locks
 Through a thousand snows ;
 In an evil day,
 From those garden-beds
 Now 'tis hacked away,—
 Down the old house goes !

Lo ! the sycamores,
 Scathed and scrawny mates,
 At the mansion doors
 Shiver, full of woes ;
 With its life they grew,
 Guarded well its gates ;
 Now their task is through,—
 Down the old house goes !

On this honoured site
 Modern trade will build,—
 What unseemly fright
 Heaven only knows !
 Something peaked and high,
 Smacking of the guild :
 Let us heave a sigh,—
 Down the old house goes !

PAN IN WALL STREET.

A.D. 1867.

JUST where the Treasury's marble front
Looks over Wall Street's mingled nations ;
Where Jews and Gentiles most are wont
To throng for trade and last quotations ;
Where, hour by hour, the rates of gold
Outrival, in the ears of people,
The quarter-chimes, serenely tolled
From Trinity's undaunted steeple,—

Even there I heard a strange, wild strain
Sound high above the modern clamour,
Above the cries of greed and gain,
The curbstone war, the auction's hammer ;
And swift, on Music's misty ways,
It led, from all this strife for millions,
To ancient, sweet-do-nothing days
Among the kirtle-robed Sicilians.

And as it stilled the multitude,
And yet more joyous rose, and shriller,
I saw the minstrel, where he stood
At ease against a Doric pillar :
One hand a droning organ played,
The other held a Pan's-pipe (fashioned
Like those of old) to lips that made
The reeds give out that strain impassioned.

'Twas Pan himself had wandered here
A-strolling through the sordid city,
And piping to the civic ear
The prelude of some pastoral ditty !
The demigod had crossed the seas,—
From haunts of shepherd, nymph, and satyr,
And Syracusan times,—to these
Far shores and twenty centuries later.

A ragged cap was on his head ;
But—hidden thus—there was no doubting
That, all with crispy locks o'erspread,
His gnarlèd horns were somewhere sprouting ;
His club-feet, cased in rusty shoes,
Were crossed, as on some frieze you see them,
And trousers, patched of divers hues,
Concealed his crooked shanks beneath them.

He filled the quivering reeds with sound,
And o'er his mouth their changes shifted,
And with his goat's-eyes looked around
Where'er the passing current drifted ;
And soon, as on Trinacrian hills
The nymphs and herdsmen ran to hear him,
Even now the tradesmen from their tills,
With clerks and porters, crowded near him.

The bulls and bears together drew
From Jauncey Court and New Street Alley,
As erst, if pastorals be true,
Came beasts from every wooded valley ;
The random passers stayed to list,—
A boxer Ægon, rough and merry,
A Broadway Daphnis, on his tryst
With Nais at the Brooklyn Ferry.

A one-eyed Cyclops halted long
In tattered cloak of army pattern,
And Galatea joined the throng,—
A blowsy, apple-vending slattern ;
While old Silenus staggered out
From some new-fangled lunch-house handy,
And bade the piper, with a shout,
To strike up Yankee Doodle Dandy !

A newsboy and a peanut-girl
Like little Fauns began to caper :
His hair was all in tangled curl,
Her tawny legs were bare and taper ;
And still the gathering larger grew,
And gave its pence and crowded nigher,
While aye the shepherd-minstrel blew
His pipe, and struck the gamut higher.

O heart of Nature, beating still
With throbs her vernal passion taught her,—
Even here, as on the vine-clad hill,
Or by the Arethusan water !
New forms may fold the speech, new lands
Arise within these ocean-portals,
But Music waves eternal wands,—
Enchantress of the souls of mortals !

So thought I,—but among us trod
A man in blue, with legal baton,
And scoffed the vagrant demigod,
And pushed him from the step I sat on.
Doubting I mused upon the cry,
“Great Pan is dead !”—and all the people
Went on their ways :—and clear and high
The quarter sounded from the steeple.

*PETER STUYVESANT'S NEW
YEAR'S CALL.*

I JAN. A.C. 1661.

WHERE nowadays the Battery lies,
New York had just begun,
A new-born babe, to rub its eyes,
In Sixteen Sixty-One.
They christened it Nieuw Amsterdam,
Those Burghers grave and stately,
And so, with schnapps and smoke and psalm,
Lived out their lives sedately.

Two windmills topped their wooden wall,
On Stadthuys gazing down,
On fort, and cabbage-plots, and all
The quaintly gabled town ;
These flapped their wings and shifted backs,
As ancient scrolls determine,
To scare the savage Hackensacks,
Paumanks, and other vermin.

At night the loyal settlers lay
Betwixt their feather-beds ;
In hose and breeches walked by day,
And smoked, and wagged their heads.
No changeful fashions came from France,
The vrouwleins to bewilder,
And cost the burgher's purse, perchance,
Its every other guilder.

In petticoats of linsey-red,
And jackets neatly kept,
The vrouws their knitting-needles sped
And deftly spun and swept.
Few modern-school flirtations there
Set wheels of scandal trundling,
But youths and maidens did their share
Of staid, old-fashioned "bundling."

—The New Year opened clear and cold ;
The snow, a Flemish ell
In depth, lay over Beeckman's Wold
And Wolfert's frozen well.
Each burgher shook his kitchen-doors,
Drew on his Holland leather,
Then stamped through drifts to do the chores,
Beshrewing all such weather.

But—after herring, ham, and kraut—
To all the gathered town
The Dominie preached the morning out,
In Calvinistic gown ;
While tough old Peter Stuyvesant
Sat pewed in foremost station,—
The potent, sage, and valiant
Third Governor of the nation.

Prayer over, at his mansion hall,
With cake and courtly smile
He met the people, one and all,
In gubernatorial style ;
Yet missed, though now the day was old,
An ancient fellow-feaster,—
Heer Govert Loockermans, that bold
Brewer and burgomeester ;

Who, in his farm-house, close without
The picket's eastern end,
Sat growling at the twinge of gout
That kept him from his friend.
But Peter strapped his wooden peg
When tea and cake were ended,
(Meanwhile the sound remaining leg
Its high jack-boot defended),

A woolsey cloak about him threw,
And swore, by wind and limb,
Since Govert kept from Peter's view,
Peter would visit him ;
Then sallied forth, through snow and blast,
While many a humble greeter
Stood wondering whereaway so fast
Strode bluff Hardkoppig Pieter.

Past quay and cowpath, through a lane
Of vats and mounded tans,
He puffed along, with might and main,
To Govert Loockermans ;
Once there, his right of entry took,
And hailed his ancient crony :
" Myn Gott ! in dese Manhattoes, Looock,
Ve gets more snow as money ! "

To which, till after whiffs profound,
The other answered not ;
At last there came responsive sound :
" Yah, Peter ; yah, Myn Gott ! "
Then godevrouw Marie sat her guest
Beneath the chimney-gable,
And courtesied, bustling at her best
To spread the New-Year's table.

She brought the pure and genial schnapps,
That years before had come—
In the “Nieuw Nederlandts,” perhaps—
To cheer the settlers’ home ;
The long-stemmed pipes ; the fragrant roll
Of pressed and crispy Spanish ;
Then placed the earthen mugs and bowl,
Nor long delayed to vanish.

Thereat, with cheery nod and wink,
And honours of the day,
The trader mixed the Governor’s drink
As evening sped away.
That ancient room ! I see it now :
The carven nutwood dresser ;
The drawers, that many a burgher’s vrouw
Begrudged their rich possessor ;

The brace of high-backed leathern chairs,
Brass-nailed at every seam ;
Six others, ranged in equal pairs ;
The bacon hung abeam ;
The chimney-front, with porcelain shelft ;
The hearty wooden fire ;
The picture, on the steaming delft,
Of David and Goliah.

I see the two old Dutchmen sit
Like Magog and his mate,
And hear them, when their pipes are lit,
Discuss affairs of state :
The clique that would their sway demean ;
The pestilent importation
Of wooden nutmegs, from the lean
And losel Yankee nation.

But when the subtle juniper
Assumed its sure command,
They drank the buxom loves that were,—
They drank the Motherland ;
They drank the famous Swedish wars,
Stout Peter's special glory,
While Govert proudly showed the scars
Of Indian contests gory.

Erelong, the berry's power awoke
Some music in their brains,
And, trumpet-like, through rolling smoke,
Rang long-forgotten strains,—
Old Flemish snatches, full of blood,
Of phantom ships and battle ;
And Peter, with his leg of wood,
Made floor and casement rattle.

Then round and round the dresser pranced,
The chairs began to wheel,
And on the board the punch-bowl danced
A Netherlandish reel ;
Till midnight o'er the farm-house spread
Her New-Year's skirts of sable,
And, inch by inch, each puzzled head
Dropt down upon the table.

But still to Peter, as he dreamed,
That table spread and turned ;
The chimney-log blazed high, and seemed
To circle as it burned ;
The town into the vision grew
From ending to beginning ;
Fort, wall, and windmill met his view,
All widening and spinning.

The cowpaths, leading to the docks,
Grew broader, whirling past,
And checkered into shining blocks,—
A city fair and vast ;
Stores, churches, mansions, overspread
The metamorphosed island,
While not a beaver showed his head
From Swamp to Kalchook highland.

Eftsoons the picture passed away ;
Hours after, Peter woke
To see a spectral streak of day
Gleam in through fading smoke ;
Still slept old Govert, snoring on
In most melodious numbers ;
No dreams of Eighteen Sixty-One
Commingled with his slumbers.

But Peter, from the farm-house door,
Gazed doubtfully around,
Rejoiced to find himself once more
On sure and solid ground.
The sky was somewhat dark ahead,
Wind east, and morning lowery ;
And on he pushed, a two-miles' tread,
To breakfast at his Bouwery.

*HOW OLD BROWN TOOK HARPER'S
FERRY.*

JOHN BROWN in Kansas settled, like a steadfast Yankee farmer,
Brave and godly, with four sons, all stalwart men
of might.

There he spoke aloud for freedom, and the Border-
strife grew warmer,

Till the Rangers fired his dwelling, in his absence,
in the night ;

And Old Brown,

Osawatomie Brown,

Came homeward in the morning—to find his house
burned down.

Then he grasped his trusty rifle and boldly fought
for freedom ;

Smote from border unto border the fierce, invading band ;

And he and his brave boys vowed—so might
Heaven help and speed 'em !—

They would save those grand old prairies from
the curse that blights the land ;

And Old Brown,

Osawatomie Brown,

Said, “ Boys, the Lord will aid us ! ” and he shoved
his ramrod down.

And the Lord *did* aid these men, and they laboured
day and even,
Saving Kansas from its peril ; and their very lives
seemed charmed,
Till the ruffians killed one son, in the blessed light
of Heaven,—
In cold blood the fellows slew him, as he journeyed
all unarmed ;
Then Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Shed not a tear, but shut his teeth, and frowned a
terrible frown !

Then they seized another brave boy,—not amid the
heat of battle,
But in peace, behind his ploughshare,—and they
loaded him with chains,
And with pikes, before their horses, even as they
goad their cattle,
Drove him cruelly, for their sport, and at last
blew out his brains ;
Then Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Raised his right hand up to Heaven, calling
Heaven's vengeance down.

And he swore a fearful oath, by the name of the
Almighty,
He would hunt this ravening evil that had
scathed and torn him so ;
He would seize it by the vitals ; he would crush it
day and night ; he
Would so pursue its footsteps, so return it blow
for blow,

That Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Should be a name to swear by, in backwoods or in
town !

Then his beard became more grizzled, and his wild
blue eye grew wilder,
And more sharply curved his hawk's-nose, snuf-
fing battle from afar ;
And he and the two boys left, though the Kansas
strife waxed milder,
Grew more sullen, till was over the bloody Border
War,

And Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Had gone crazy, as they reckoned by his fearful
glare and frown.

So he left the plains of Kansas and their bitter woes
behind him,
Slipt off into Virginia, where the statesmen all
are born,
Hired a farm by Harper's Ferry, and no one knew
where to find him,
Or whether he'd turned parson, or was jacketed
and shorn ;

For Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,
Mad as he was, knew texts enough to wear a
parson's gown.

He bought no ploughs and harrows, spades and
shovels, and such trifles ;
But quietly to his rancho there came, by every
train,

Boxes full of pikes and pistols, and his well-beloved
Sharp's rifles ;

And eighteen other madmen joined their leader
there again.

Says Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,

“ Boys, we've got an army large enough to march
and take the town !

“ Take the town, and seize the muskets, free the
negroes and then arm them ;

Carry the County and the State, ay, and all the
potent South.

On their own heads be the slaughter, if their victims
rise to harm them—

These Virginians ! who believed not, nor would
heed the warning mouth.”

Says Old Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,

“ The world shall see a Republic, or my name is not
John Brown.”

'Twas the sixteenth of October, on the evening of
a Sunday :

“ This good work,” declared the captain, “ shall
be on a holy night !”

It was on a Sunday evening, and before the noon of
Monday,

With two sons, and Captain Stephens, fifteen
privates—black and white,

Captain Brown,
Osawatomie Brown,

Marched across the bridged Potomac, and knocked
the sentry down ;

Took the guarded armoury-building, and the muskets
and the cannon ;

Captured all the county majors and the colonels,
one by one ;

Scared to death each gallant scion of Virginia they
ran on,

And before the noon of Monday, I say, the deed
was done.

Mad Old Brown,

Osawatomie Brown,

With his eighteen other crazy men, went in and
took the town.

Very little noise and bluster, little smell of powder
made he ;

It was all done in the midnight, like the Emperor's
coup d'état.

“Cut the wires ! Stop the rail-cars ! Hold the
streets and bridges !” said he,

Then declared the new Republic, with himself for
guiding star,—

This Old Brown,

Osawatomie Brown ;

And the bold two thousand citizens ran off and left
the town.

Then was riding and railroading and expressing
here and thither ;

And the Martinsburg Sharpshooters and the
Charlestown Volunteers,

And the Shepherdstown and Winchester Militia
hastened whither

Old Brown was said to muster his ten thousand
grenadiers.

General Brown !

Osawatomie Brown !!

Behind whose rampant banner all the North was
pouring down.

But at last, 'tis said, some prisoners escaped from
Old Brown's durance,

And the effervescent valour of the Chivalry broke
out,

When they learned that nineteen madmen had the
marvellous assurance—

Only nineteen—thus to seize the place and drive
them straight about ;

And Old Brown,

Osawatomie Brown,

Found an army come to take him, encamped
around the town.

But to storm, with all the forces I have mentioned,
was too risky ;

So they hurried off to Richmond for the Govern-
ment Marines,

Tore them from their weeping matrons, fired their
souls with Bourbon whiskey,

Till they battered down Brown's castle with their
ladders and machines ;

And Old Brown,

Osawatomie Brown,

Received three bayonet stabs, and a cut on his
brave old crown.

Tallyho ! the old Virginia gentry gather to the
baying !

In they rushed and killed the game, shooting
lustily away ;

And whene'er they slew a rebel, those who came
too late for slaying,

Not to lose a share of glory, fired their bullets in
his clay ;

And Old Brown,

Osawatomie Brown,

Saw his sons fall dead beside him, and between
them laid him down.

How the conquerors wore their laurels ; how they
hastened on the trial ;

How Old Brown was placed, half dying, on the
Charlestown court-house floor ;

How he spoke his grand oration, in the scorn of all
denial ;

What the brave old madman told them,—these
are known the country o'er.

“ Hang Old Brown,

Osawatomie Brown,”

Said the judge, “and all such rebels !” with his
most judicial frown.

But, Virginians, don't do it ! for I tell you that the
flagon,

Filled with blood of Old Brown's offspring, was
first poured by Southern hands ;

And each drop from Old Brown's life-veins, like the
red gore of the dragon,

May spring up a vengeful Fury, hissing through
your slave-worn lands !

And Old Brown,

Osawatomie Brown,

May trouble you more than ever, when you've
nailed his coffin down !

HORACE GREELEY.

EARTH, let thy softest mantle rest
On this worn child to thee returning,
Whose youth was nurtured at thy breast,
Who loved thee with such tender yearning !
He knew thy fields and woodland ways,
And deemed thy humblest son his brother ;—
Asleep, beyond our blame or praise,
We yield him back, O gentle Mother !

Of praise, of blame, he drank his fill :
Who has not read the life-long story ?
And dear we hold his fame, but still
The man was dearer than his glory.
And now to us are left alone
The closet where his shadow lingers,
The vacant chair,—that was a throne,—
The pen, just fallen from his fingers.

Wrath changed to kindness on that pen ;
Though dipped in gall, it flowed with honey ;
One flash from out the cloud, and then
The skies with smile and jest were sunny.
Of hate he surely lacked the art,
Who made his enemy his lover :
O reverend head and Christian heart !
Where now their like the round world over ?

He saw the goodness, not the taint,
 In many a poor, do-nothing creature,
 And gave to sinner and to saint,
 But kept his faith in human nature ;
 Perchance he was not worldly-wise,
 Yet we who noted, standing nearer,
 The shrewd, kind twinkle in his eyes,
 For every weakness held him dearer.

Alas that unto him who gave
 So much, so little should be given !
 Himself alone he might not save
 Of all for whom his hands had striven.
 Place, freedom, fame, his work bestowed :
 Men took, and passed, and left him lonely ;—
 What marvel if, beneath his load,
 At times he craved—for justice only !

Yet thanklessness, the serpent's tooth,
 His lofty purpose could not alter ;
 Toil had no power to bend his youth
 Or make his lusty manhood falter ;
 From envy's sling, from slander's dart,
 That armoured soul the body shielded,
 Till one dark sorrow chilled his heart,
 And then he bowed his head and yielded.

Now, now, we measure at its worth
 The gracious presence gone for ever !
 The wrinkled East, that gave him birth,
 Laments with every labouring river ;
 Wild moan the free winds of the West
 For him who gathered to her prairies
 The sons of men, and made each crest
 The haunt of happy household fairies ;

And anguish sits upon the mouth

Of her who came to know him latest :

His heart was ever thine, O South !

He was thy truest friend, and greatest !

He shunned thee in thy splendid shame,

He stayed thee in thy voiceless sorrow ;

The day thou shalt forget his name,

Fair South, can have no sadder morrow.

The tears that fall from eyes unused,—

The hands above his grave united,—

The words of men whose lips he loosed,

Whose cross he bore, whose wrongs he righted,—

Could he but know, and rest with this !

Yet stay, through Death's low-lying hollow,

His one last foe's insatiate hiss

On that benignant shade would follow !

Peace ! while we shroud this man of men

Let no unhallowed word be spoken ;

He will not answer thee again,

His mouth is sealed, his wand is broken.

Some holier cause, some vaster trust

Beyond the veil, he doth inherit :

O gently, Earth, receive his dust,

And Heaven soothe his troubled spirit !

December 3, 1872.

THE OLD ADMIRAL.

GONE at last,
 That brave old hero of the Past !
 His spirit has a second birth,
 An unknown, grander life ;—
 All of him that was earth
 Lies mute and cold,
 Like a wrinkled sheath and old
 Thrown off for ever from the shimmering blade
 That has good entrance made
 Upon some distant, glorious strife.

From another generation,
 A simpler age, to ours Old Ironsides came ;
 The morn and noontide of the nation
 Alike he knew, nor yet outlived his fame,—
 Oh, not outlived his fame !
 The dauntless men whose service guards our
 shore
 Lengthen still their glory-roll
 With his name to lead the scroll,
 As a flagship at her fore
 Carries the Union, with its azure and the stars,
 Symbol of times that are no more
 And the old heroic wars.

He was the one
Whom Death had spared alone
Of all the captains of that lusty age,
Who sought the foeman where he lay,
On sea or sheltering bay,
Nor till the prize was theirs repressed their rage.
They are gone,—all gone :
They rest with glory and the undying Powers ;
Only their name and fame and what they saved
are ours !

It was fifty years ago,
Upon the Gallic Sea,
He bore the banner of the free,
And fought the fight whereof our children know.
The deathful, desperate fight !—
Under the fair moon's light
The frigate squared, and yawed to left and right.
Every broadside swept to death a score !
Roundly played her guns and well, till their fiery
ensigns fell,
Neither foe replying more.
All in silence, when the night-breeze cleared the
air,
Old Ironsides rested there,
Locked in between the twain, and drenched with
blood.
Then homeward, like an eagle with her prey !
Oh, it was a gallant fray,
That fight in Biscay Bay !
Fearless the Captain stood, in his youthful hardi-
hood ;
He was the boldest of them all,
Our brave old Admiral.

And still our heroes bleed,
Taught by that olden deed.

Whether of iron or of oak
The ships we marshal at our country's need,
Still speak their cannon now as then they spoke ;
Still floats our unstruck banner from the mast
As in the stormy Past.

Lay him in the ground :

Let him rest where the ancient river rolls ;
Let him sleep beneath the shadow and the sound
Of the bell whose proclamation, as it tolls,
Is of Freedom and the gift our fathers gave.

Lay him gently down :
The clamour of the town
Will not break the slumbers deep, the beautiful
ripe sleep
Of this lion of the wave,
Will not trouble the old Admiral in his grave.

Earth to earth his dust is laid.
Methinks his stately shade

On the shadow of a great ship leaves the shore ;
Over cloudless western seas
Seeks the far Hesperides,
The islands of the blest,
Where no turbulent billows roar,—
Where is rest.

His ghost upon the shadowy quarter stands
Nearing the deathless lands.

There all his martial mates, renewed and strong,
Await his coming long.
I see the happy Heroes rise
With gratulation in their eyes :

“Welcome, old comrade,” Lawrence cries ;

“Ah, Stewart, tell us of the wars !

Who win the glory and the scars ?

How floats the skyey flag,—how many stars ?

Still speak they of Decatur’s name,

Of Bainbridge’s and Perry’s fame ?

Of me, who earliest came ?

Make ready, all :

Room for the Admiral !

Come, Stewart, tell us of the wars !”

KEARNY AT SEVEN PINES.

SO that soldierly legend is still on its journey,—
That story of Kearny who knew not to yield !

’Twas the day when with Jameson, fierce Berry,
and Birney,

Against twenty thousand he rallied the field.

Where the red volleys poured, where the clamour
rose highest,

Where the dead lay in clumps through the dwarf
oak and pine,

Where the aim from the thicket was surest and
nighest,—

No charge like Phil Kearny’s along the whole
line.

When the battle went ill, and the bravest were
solemn,

Near the dark Seven Pines, where we still held
our ground,

He rode down the length of the withering column,
And his heart at our war-cry leapt up with a
bound ;
He snuffed, like his charger, the wind of the
powder,—
His sword waved us on and we answered the
sign :
Loud our cheer as we rushed, but his laugh rang
the louder,
“There’s the devil’s own fun, boys, along the
whole line !”

How he strode his brown steed ! How we saw his
blade brighten
In the one hand still left,—and the reins in his
teeth !
He laughed like a boy when the holidays heighten,
But a soldier’s glance shot from his visor
beneath.
Up came the reserves to the mellay infernal,
Asking where to go in,—through the clearing or
pine ?
“Oh, anywhere ! Forward ! ’Tis all the same,
Colonel :
You’ll find lovely fighting along the whole
line !”

Oh, evil the black shroud of night at Chantilly,
That hid him from sight of his brave men and
tried !
Foul, foul sped the bullet that clipped the white
lily,
The flower of our knighthood, the whole army’s
pride !

Yet we dream that he still,—in that shadowy
region

Where the dead form their ranks at the wan
drummer's sign,—

Rides on, as of old, down the length of his legion,
And the word still is Forward ! along the whole
line.

CUSTER.

WHAT ! shall that sudden blade
Leap out no more ?

No more thy hand be laid

Upon the sword-hilt, smiting sore ?

Oh for another such

The charger's rein to clutch,—

One equal voice to summon victory,

Sounding thy battle-cry,

Brave darling of the soldiers' choice !

Would there were one more voice !

O gallant charge, too bold !

O fierce, imperious greed

To pierce the clouds that in their darkness hold

Slaughter of man and steed !

Now, stark and cold,

Among thy fallen braves thou liest,

And even with thy blood defiest

The wolfish foe :

But ah, thou liest low,

And all our birthday song is hushed indeed !

Young lion of the plain,
Thou of the tawny mane !
Hotly the soldiers' hearts shall beat,
Their mouths thy death repeat,
Their vengeance seek the trail again
Where thy red doomsmen be ;
But on the charge no more shall stream
Thy hair,—no more thy sabre gleam,—
No more ring out thy battle-shout,
Thy cry of victory !

Not when a hero falls
The sound a world appalls :
For while we plant his cross
There is a glory, even in the loss :
But when some craven heart
From honour dares to part,
Then, then, the groan, the blanching cheek,
And men in whispers speak,
Nor kith nor country dare reclaim
From the black depths his name.

Thou, wild young warrior, rest,
By all the prairie winds caressed !
Swift was thy dying pang ;
Even as the war-cry rang
Thy deathless spirit mounted high
And sought Columbia's sky :—
There, to the northward far,
Shines a new star
And from it blazes down
The light of thy renown !

July 10, 1876.

HYPATIA.

'TIS fifteen hundred years, you say,
 Since that fair teacher died
In learnèd Alexandria
 By the stone altar's side :—
The wild monks slew her, as she lay
 At the feet of the Crucified.

Yet in a prairie-town, one night,
 I found her lecture-hall,
Where bench and dais stood aright,
 And statues graced the wall,
And pendent brazen lamps the light
 Of classic days let fall.

A throng that watched the speaker's face,
 And on her accents hung,
Was gathered there : the strength, the grace
 Of lands where life is young
Ceased not, I saw, with that blithe race
 From old Pelasgia sprung.

No civic crown the sibyl wore,
 Nor academic tire,
But shining skirts, that trailed the floor
 And made her stature higher ;
A written scroll the lectern bore,
 And flowers bloomed anigh her.

The wealth her honeyed speech had won
Adorned her in our sight ;
The silkworm for her sake had spun
His cincture, day and night ;
With broider-work and Honiton
Her open sleeves were bright.

But still Hypatia's self I knew,
And saw, with dreamy wonder,
The form of her whom Cyril slew
(See Kingsley's novel, yonder)
Some fifteen centuries since, 'tis true,
And half a world asunder.

Her hair was coifed Athenian-wise,
With one loose tress down-flowing ;
Apollo's rapture lit her eyes,
His utterance bestowing,—
A silver flute's clear harmonies
On which a god was blowing.

Yet not of Plato's sounding spheres,
And universal Pan,
She spoke ; but searched historic years,
The sisterhood to scan
Of women,—girt with ills and fears,—
Slaves to the tyrant, Man.

Their crosiered banner she unfurled,
And onward pushed her quest
Through golden ages of a world
By their deliverance blest :—
At all who stay their hands she hurled
Defiance from her breast.

I saw her burning words infuse
A warmth through many a heart,
As still, in bright successive views,
She drew her sex's part ;
Discoursing, like the Lesbian Muse,
Of work, and song, and art.

Why vaunt, I thought, the past, or say
The later is the less ?
Our Sappho sang but yesterday,
Of whom two climes confess
Heaven's flame within her wore away
Her earthly loveliness.

So let thy wild heart ripple on,
Brave girl, through vale and city !
Spare, of its listless moments, one
To this, thy poet's ditty ;
Nor long forbear, when all is done,
Thine own sweet self to pity.

The priestess of the Sestian tower,
Whose knight the sea swam over,
Among her votaries' gifts no flower
Of heart's-ease could discover :
She died, but in no evil hour,
Who, dying, clasped her lover.

The rose-tree has its perfect life
When the full rose is blown ;
Some height of womanhood the wife
Beyond thy dream has known ;
Set not thy head and heart at strife
To keep thee from thine own.

Hypatia ! thine essence rare
The rarer joy should merit :
Possess thee of that common share
Which lesser souls inherit :
All gods to thee their garlands bear,—
Take one from Love and wear it !

COUNTRY SLEIGHING.

A NEW SONG TO AN OLD TUNE.

IN January, when down the dairy
The cream and clabber freeze,
When snow-drifts cover the fences over,
We farmers take our ease.
At night we rig the team,
And bring the cutter out ;
Then fill it, fill it, fill it, fill it,
And heap the furs about.

Here friends and cousins dash up by dozens,
And sleighs at least a score ;
There John and Molly, behind, are jolly,—
Nell rides with me, before.
All down the village street
We range us in a row :
Now jingle, jingle, jingle, jingle,
And over the crispy snow !

The windows glisten, the old folks listen
To hear the sleigh-bells pass ;
The fields grow whiter, the stars are brighter,
The road is smooth as glass.

Our muffled faces burn,
The clear north-wind blows cold,
The girls all nestle, nestle, nestle,
Each in her lover's hold.

Through bridge and gateway we're shooting
straightway,
Their tollman was too slow !
He'll listen after our song and laughter
As over the hill we go.
The girls cry, " Fie ! for shame !"
Their cheeks and lips are red,
And so, with kisses, kisses, kisses,
They take the toll instead.

Still follow, follow ! across the hollow
The tavern fronts the road.
Whoa, now ! all steady ! the host is ready,—
He knows the country mode !
The irons are in the fire,
The hissing flip is got ;
So pour and sip it, sip it, sip it,
And sip it while 'tis hot.

Push back the tables, and from the stables
Bring Tom, the fiddler, in ;
All take your places, and make your graces,
And let the dance begin.
The girls are beating time
To hear the music sound ;
Now foot it, foot it, foot it, foot it,
And swing your partners round.

Last couple toward the left ! all forward !
Cotillons through, let's wheel :
First tune the fiddle, then down the middle
In old Virginia Reel.
Play Money Musk to close,
Then take the "long chassé,"
While in to supper, supper, supper,
The landlord leads the way.

The bells are ringing, the ostlers bringing
The cutters up anew ;
The beasts are neighing ; too long we're
staying,
The night is half-way through.
Wrap close the buffalo-ropes,
We're all aboard once more ;
Now jingle, jingle, jingle, jingle,
Away from the tavern-door !

So follow, follow, by hill and hollow,
And swiftly homeward glide.
What midnight splendour ! how warm and
tender
The maiden by your side !
The sleighs drop far apart,
Her words are soft and low ;
Now, if you love her, love her, love her,
'Tis safe to tell her so.

THE FRESHET.

A CONNECTICUT IDYLL.

LAST August, of a three weeks' country tour,
Five dreamy days were passed amid old
elms

And older mansions, and in leafy dales,
That knew us till our elders pushed us forth
To larger life,—as eagles push their young,
New-fledged and wondering, from the eyrie's edge,
To cater for themselves.

I fell in, there,
With Gilbert Ripley, once my chum at Yale.
Poor Gilbert groaned along a double year,—
Read, spoke, boxed, fenced, rowed, trod the foot-
ball ground,—

Loving the college library more than Greek,
His meerschaum most of all. But when we came
Together, gathered from the breathing-time
They give the fellows while the dog-days last,
He found the harness chafe ; then grew morose,
And kicked above the traces, going home
Hardly a Junior, but a sounder man,
In mind and body, than a host who win
Your baccalaureate honours. There he stayed,
Half tired of bookmen, on his father's farm,
And gladly felt the plough-helve. In a year

'The old man gave his blessing to the son,
And left his life, as 'twere his harvest-field,
When work was over. Gilbert hugged the farm,
Now made his own, besides a pretty sum
In good State Sixes ; partly worked the land,
With separate theories for every field,
And partly led the student-life of old,
Mouthing his Shakespeare's ballads to himself
Among the meadow-mows ; or, when he read
In the evening, found a picture of his bull,
Just brought from Devon, sleek as silk, loom in
Before his vision. Thus he weighed his tastes,
Each against each, in happiest equipoise.
The neighbour farmers seeing he had thrift
That would not run to waste, and pardoning all
Beyond their understanding, wished him well.

But when I saw him stride among his stock,—
Straight-shouldered cattle, breathing of the field,—
Saw him how blowze and hearty ; then, at eve,
Close sitting by his mother in the porch,
Heard him discuss the methods of the times,
The need our country has of stalwart men,
Who scorn the counter and will till the land,
Strong-handed, free of thought,—I somehow felt
The man was noble, and his simple life
More like the pattern given in the Mount
Than mine, hedged close about with city life
And grim, conventional manners.

So much, then,
For Gilbert Ripley. Not to dwell too long
Upon his doings, let me tell the tale
I got from him, one hazy afternoon,

When he and I had wandered to the bridge,
New-built across our favourite of the streams
That skirt the village,—here three miles apart,
Twin currents, joining in a third below.

There memory's shallop bore us dreamily,
Through changeful windings, to the long, long days
Of June vacations. How we boys would thrid
The alder thickets at the water's edge,
Conjecturing forward, though the Present lay
Like Eden round us ; for the Future shone—
The sun to which each young heart turned for light !
What wild conceits of great, oracular lives,
Ourselves would equal ! but let that go by :
Each has gone by, in turn, to humbler fates.
Sometimes we angled, and our trolling hooks
Swung the gray pickerel from his reedy shoals.
Beyond a horseshoe bend, the current's force
Wore out a deeper channel, where the shore
Fell off, precipitous, on the western side.
There dived the bathers ; there I learned to
swim,—

Flung far into the middle stream by one
Who watched my gaspings, laughing, till my limbs,
Half of themselves, struck out, and held me up.
Far down, a timbered dam, from bank to bank,
Shut back the waters in a shadowy lake,
About a mimic island. Languidly
The chestnuts still infoliate its space,
And still the whispering flags are intertwined
With whitest water-lilies near the marge.
Close by, the paper-mill, with murmurous wheel,
Still glistens through the branches, while its score
Of laughing maidens throng the copse at noon.

But we, with careless arms upon the rail,
Peered through and through the water; almost
saw
Its silvery Naiads, from their wavering depths,
Gleam with strange faces upward; almost heard
Sweet voices carol: "Ah, you all come back!
We charm your childhood; then you roam away,
To float on alien waters, like the winds;
But, ah, you all come back,—come dreaming
back!"

At last I broke the silence: "See," I said
To Gilbert, "see how fair our dear old stream!
How calm, beneath the shadows of the piers,
It eddies in and out, and cools itself
In slumberous ripples whispering repose."

But he made answer: "Yes, this August day
The wave is summer-charmed, the fields are hazed;
But in the callow Spring, when Easter winds
Are on us, laden with rain, these fickle streams—
More gentle now than in his cradled sleep
Some Alexander—take up arms, spread wide,
Leap high and cruel in a fierce campaign
Along their valleys. See this trellised bridge,
New-built, and firmer than the one from which
We fellows dropped the line:—*that* went away
Two years ago, like straw before a gale,
In the great April flood, of which you heard,
When George and Lucy Dorrance lost their lives.
I saw them perish. You remember her,—
She that was Lucy Hall,—a charming girl,
The fairest of our schoolmates, with a heart

Light as her smile and fastened all upon
The boy that won her ; yet her glances fell
Among us, right and left, like shooting stars
In clear October nights when winds are still.

“ That year our Equinoctial came along
Ere the snow left us. Under mountain pines
White drifts lay frozen like the dead, and down
Through many a gorge the bristling hemlocks
crossed
Their spears above the ice-enfettered brooks ;
But the pent river wailed, through prison walls,
For freedom and the time to rend its chains.
At last it came : five days a drenching rain
Flooded the country ; snow-drifts fell away ;
The brooks grew rivers, and the river here—
A ravenous, angry torrent—tore up banks,
And overflowed the meadows, league on league.
Great cakes of ice, four-square, with mounds of
hay,
Fence-rails, and scattered drift-wood, and huge
beams
From broken dams above us, mill-wheel ties,
Smooth lumber, and the torn-up trunks of trees,
Swept downward, strewing all the land about.
Sometimes the flood surrounded, unawares,
Stray cattle, or a flock of timorous sheep,
And bore them with it, struggling, till the ice
Beat shape and being from them. You know how
These freshets scour our valleys. So it raged
A night and day ; but when the day grew night
The storm fell off ; lastly, the sun went down
Quite clear of clouds, and ere he came again
The flood began to lower.

“Through the rise
We men had been at work, like water-sprites,
Lending a helping hand to cottagers
Along the lowlands. Now, at early morn,
The banks were sentry-lined with thrifty swains,
Who hauled great stores of drift-wood up the slope.
But toward the bridge our village maidens soon
Came flocking, thick as swallows after storms,
When, with light wing, they skim the happy fields
And greet the sunshine. Danger mostly gone,
They watched the thunderous passage of the flood
Between the abutments, while the upper stream,
Far as they saw, lay like a seething strait,
From hill to hill. Below, with gradual fall
Through narrower channels, all was clash and clang
And inarticulate tumult. Through the grove
Yonder, our picnic-ground, the driving tide
Struck a new channel, and the craggy ice
Scored down its saplings. Following with the rest
Came George and Lucy, not three honeymoons
Made man and wife, and happier than a pair
Of cooing ring-doves in the early June.

“Two piers, you know, bore up the former bridge,
Cleaving the current, wedge-like, on the north ;
Between them stood our couple, intergrouped
With many others. On a sudden loomed
An immolating terror from above,—
A floating field of ice, where fifty cakes
Had clung together, mingled with a mass
Of ruin from the upper conflict, logs
Woven in with planks and fence-rails ; and in front
One huge, old, fallen trunk rose like a wall
Across the channel. Then arose a cry

From all who saw it, clamouring, *Flee the bridge !
Run shoreward for your lives !* and all made haste,
Eastward and westward, till they felt the ground
Stand firm beneath them ; but, with close-locked
arms,

Lucy and George still looked, from the lower rail,
Toward the promontory where we stood,
Nor saw the death, nor seemed to hear the cry.
Run, George ! run, Lucy ! shouted all at once :
Too late, too late ! for, with resistless crash,
Against both piers that mighty ruin lay
A space that seemed an hour, yet far too short
For rescue. Swaying slowly back and forth,
With ponderous tumult, all the bridge went off ;
Piers, beams, planks, railings snapped their groan-
ing ties
And fell asunder !

“ But the middle part,
Wrought with great bolts of iron, like a raft
Held out awhile, whirled onward in the wreck
This way and that, and washed with freezing spray.
Faster than I can tell you, it came down
Beyond our point, and in a flash we saw
George, on his knees, close-clinging for dear life,
One arm around the remnant of the rail,
One clasping Lucy. We were pale as they,
Powerless to save ; but even as they swept
Across the bend, and twenty stalwart men
Ran to and fro with clamour for *A rope !
A boat !*—their cries together reached the shore :
Save her ! Save him !—so true Love conquers all.
Furlongs below they still more closely held
Each other, 'mid a thousand shocks of ice

And seething horrors ; till, at last, the end
Came, where the river, scornful of its bed,
Struck a new channel, roaring through the grove.
There, dashed against a naked beech that stood
Grimly in front, their shattered raft gave up
Its precious charge ; and then a mist of tears
Blinded all eyes, through which we seemed to see
Two forms in death-clasp whirled along the flood,
And all was over.

“ Then from out the crowd
Certain went up the lane, and broke the news
To Lucy’s widowed mother ; she spoke not,
Nor wept, nor murmured, but with stony glare
Took in her loss, like Niobe, and to bed
Moved stolidly and never rose again.
Old Farmer Dorrance gave a single groan,
And hurried down among us—all the man,
Though white with anguish—as we took our course
Around the meadows, searching for the dead.

“ An eddying gulf ran hither up the bank,
Close by the paper-mill, and there the flood
Gave back its booty ; there we found them laid,
Covered with floating leaves and twigs of trees,
Not many feet apart : so Love’s last clasp
Held lingeringly, until the cruel ice
Battered its fastenings. On a rustic bier,
Made of loose boughs and strewn with winter
ferns,
We placed them, side by side, and bore them
home.
The old man walked behind them, by himself,
And wrung his hands and bowed his head in tears.”

So Gilbert told his story ; I, meanwhile,
 Followed his finger's pointing, as it marked
 Each spot he mentioned, like a teacher's wand.
 But now the sun hung low ; from many a field
 The loitering kine went home with tinkling bells.
 Slow-turning, toward the farm we made our way,
 And met a host of maidens, merry-eyed,
 Whom I knew not, yet caught a frequent glance
 I seemed to know, that half-way brought to mind
 Sweet eyes I loved to watch in schoolboy days,—
 Sweet sister-eyes to those that glistened now.

THE SKULL IN THE GOLD DRIFT.

WHAT ho ! dumb jester, cease to grin and
 mask it !

Grim courier, thou hast stayed upon the road !
 Yield up the secret of this battered casket,
 This shard, where once a living soul abode !
 What dost thou here ? how long hast lain imbedded
 In crystal sands, the drift of Time's despair ;
 Thine earth to earth with aureate dower wedded,
 Thy parts all changed to something rich and
 rare ?

Voiceless thou art, and yet a revelation
 Of that most ancient world beneath the new ;
 But who shall guess thy race, thy name and station,
 Æons and æons ere these boulders grew ?
 What alchemy can make thy visage liker
 Its untransmuted shape, thy flesh restore, .
 Resolve to blood again thy golden ichor,
 Possess thee of the life thou hadst before ?

Before ! And when ? What ages immemorial
Have passed since daylight fell where thou dost
sleep !

What molten strata, ay, and flotsam boreal,
Have shielded well thy rest, and pressed thee
deep !

Thou little wist what mighty floods descended,
How sprawled the armoured monsters in their
camp,

Nor heardest, when the watery cycle ended,
The mastodon and mammoth o'er thee tramp.

How seemed this globe of ours when thou didst
scan it ?

When, in its lusty youth, there sprang to birth
All that hath life, unnurtured, and the planet

Was paradise, the true Saturnian earth !

Far toward the poles was stretched the happy
garden ;

Earth kept it fair by warmth from her own
breast ;

Toil had not come to dwarf her sons and harden ;

No crime (there was no want) perturbed their
rest.

How lived thy kind ? Was there no duty blended
With all their toilless joy,—no grand desire ?

Perchance as shepherds on the meads they tended

Their flocks, and knew the pastoral pipe and
lyre ;

Until a hundred happy generations,

Whose birth and death had neither pain nor fear,

At last, in riper ages, brought the nations

To modes which we renew who greet thee here.

How stately then they built their royal cities,
With what strong engines speeded to and fro ;
What music thrilled their souls ; what poets' ditties
Made youth with love, and age with honour
glow !

And had they then their Homer, Kepler, Bacon ?
Did some Columbus find an unknown clime ?
Was there an archetypal Christ, forsaken
Of those he tried to save, in that far time ?

When came the end ? What terrible convulsion
Heaved from within the Earth's distended shell ?
What pent-up demons, by their fierce repulsion,
Made of that sunlit crust a sunless hell ?
How, when the hour was ripe, those deathful forces
In one resistless doom o'erwhelmed ye all ;
Ingulfed the seas and dried the river courses,
And made the forests and the cities fall !

Ah me ! with what a sudden, dreadful thunder
The whole round world was split from pole to
pole !

Down sank the continents, the waters under,
And fire burst forth where now the oceans roll ;
Of those wan flames the dismal exhalations
Stifled, anon, each living creature's breath,
Dear life was driven from its utmost stations,
And seethed beneath the smoking pall of death ?

Then brawling leapt full height yon helméd giants ;
The proud Sierras on the skies laid hold ;
Their watch and ward have bidden time defiance,
Guarding thy grave amid the sands of gold.

Thy kind was then no more ! What untold ages,
Ere Man, renewed from earth by slow degrees,
Woke to the strife he now with Nature wages
O'er ruder lands and more tempestuous seas.

How poor the gold, that made thy burial splendid,
Beside one single annal of thy race,
One implement, one fragment that attended
Thy life—which now hath left not even a trace !
From the soul's realm awhile recall thy spirit,
See how the land is spread, how flows the main,
The tribes that in thy stead the globe inherit,
Their grand unrest, their eager joy and pain.

Beneath our feet a thousand ages moulder,
Grayer our skies than thine, the winds more
chill ;
Thine the young world, and ours the hoarier,
colder,
But Man's unfaltering heart is dauntless still.
And yet—and yet like thine his solemn story ;
Grove where he will, transition lies before ;
We, too, must pass ! our wisdom, works, and glory
In turn shall yield, and change, and be no more.

HAWTHORNE.

*Read before the Society of the Phi Beta Kappa,
Harvard University, Cambridge, June 28, 1877.*

HAWTHORNE.

HARP of New England song,
That even in slumber tremblest
with the touch
Of poets who like the four winds from thee
waken
All harmonies that to thy strings belong,—
Say, wilt thou blame the younger hands too much
Which from thy laurelled resting-place have
taken
Thee, crowned-one, in their hold? There is a
name
Should quicken thee! No carol Hawthorne
sang,
Yet his articulate spirit, like thine own,
Made answer, quick as flame,
To each breath of the shore from which he
sprang,
And prose like his was poesy's high tone.

By measureless degrees
Star follows star throughout the rounded night.
Far off his path began, yet reached the near
Sweet influences of the Pleiades,—
A portion and a sharer of the light
That shall so long outlast each burning sphere.

Beneath the shade and whisper of the pines
Two youths were fostered in the Norseland air ;
One found an eagle's plume, and one the wand
 Wherewith a seer divines :
Now but the Minstrel * lingers of that pair,—
The rod has fallen from the Mage's hand.

Gray on thy mountain height,
More fair than wonderland beside thy streams,
Thou with the splendours twain of youth and age,
This was the son who read thy heart aright,
Of whom thou wast beholden in his dreams,—
The one New-Englander ! Upon whose page
Thine offspring still are animate, and move
Adown thy paths, a quaint and stately throng :
Grave men of God who made the olden law,
 Fair maidens, meet for love,—
All living types that to the coast belong
 Since Carver from the prow thy headlands
 saw.

What should the master be
Who to the world New-England's self must render,
Her best interpreter, her very own ?
How spake the brooding Mother, strong and tender,
Back-looking through her youth betwixt the moan
Of forests and the murmur of the sea ?
"Thou too," she said, " must first be set aside
To keep my ancient vigil for a space,—
Taught by repression, by the combating
 With thine own pride of pride,
An unknown watcher in a lonely place
 With none on whom thine utterance to fling."

* Longfellow.

But first of all she fed
Her heart's own favourite upon the store
Of precious things she treasures in her woods,
Of charm and story in her valleys spread.
For him her whispering winds and brooks that pour
Made ceaseless music in the solitudes ;
The manifold bright surges of her deep
Gave him their light. Within her voice's call
She lured him on, by roadways overhung
With elms, that he might keep
Remembrance of her legends as they fall
Her shaded walks and gabled roofs among.

Within the mists she drew,
Anon, his silent footsteps, as her own
Were led of old, until he came to be
An eremite, whose life the desert knew,
And gained companionship in dreams alone.
The world, it seemed, had naught for such as
he,—
For one who, in his heart's deep wilderness
Shrunk darkling and, whatever wind might blow,
Found no quick use for potent hands and fain,
No chance that might express
To human-kind the thoughts which moved him
so.
—Oh, deem not those long years were quite
in vain !

For his was the brave soul
Which, touched with fire, dwells not on whatsoever
Its outer senses hold in their intent,
But, sleepless even in sleep, must gather toll

Of dreams which pass like barks upon the river
And make each vision Beauty's instrument ;
That from its own love Love's delight can tell,
And from its own grief guess the shrouded
Sorrow ;
From its own joyousness of Joy can sing ;
That can predict so well
From its own dawn the lustre of to-morrow,
The whole flight from the flutter of the wing.

And his the gift which sees
A revelation and a tropic sign
In the lone passion-flower, and can discover
The likeness of the far Antipodes,
Though but a leaf is stranded from the brine ;
His the fine spirit which is so true a lover
Of sovran Art, that all the becks of life
Allure it not until the work be wrought.
Nay, though the shout and smoke of combat rose,
He, through the changeful strife,
Eternal loveliness more closely sought,
And Beauty's changeless law and sure repose.

Was it not well that one—
One, if no more—should meditate aloof,
Though not for naught the time's heroic quarrel,
From what men rush to do and what is done.
He little knew to join the web and woof
Whereof slow Progress weaves her rich apparel,
But toward the Past half longing turned his head.
His deft hand dallied with its common share
Of human toil, nor sought new loads to lift,
But held itself, instead,
All consecrate to uses that make fair,
By right divine of his mysterious gift.

How should the world discern
The artist's self, save through the fine creation
Of his rare moment? How, but from his song,
The unfettered spirit of the minstrel learn?
Yet on this one the stars had set the station
Which to the chief romancer should belong:
Child of the Beautiful! whose regnant brow
She made her canopy, and from his eyes
Looked outward with a steadfast purple gleam.
Who saw him marvelled how
The soul of that impassioned ray could lie
So calm beyond,—unspoken all its dream.

What sibyl to him bore
The secret oracles that move and haunt?
At night's dread noon he scanned the enchanted
glass,
Ay, and himself the warlock's mantle wore,
Nor to the thronging phantoms said Avaunt,
But waved his rod and bade them rise and pass;
Till thus he drew the lineaments of men
Who fought the old colonial battles three,
Who with the lustihood of Nature warred
And made her docile,—then
Wrestled with Terror and with Tyranny,
Twin wardens of the scaffold and the sword.

He drew his native land,
The few and rude plantations of her Past,
Fringed by the beaches of her sounding shore;
Her children, as he drew them, there they stand;
There, too, her Present, with an outline cast
Still from the shape those other centuries wore.

Betimes the orchards and the clover-fields
Change into woods o'ershadowing a host
That winds along the Massachusetts Path ;
The sword of Standish shields
The Plymouth band, and where the lewd ones
boast
Stern Endicott pours out his godly wrath.

Within the Province House
The ancient governors hold their broidered state,—
Still gleam the lights, the shadows come and go ;
Here once again the powdered guests carouse,
The masquerade lasts on, the night is late.
Thrice waves a mist-invoking wand, and lo,
What troubled sights ! What summit bald and steep
Where stands a ladder 'gainst the accursed tree ?
What dark processions thither slowly climb ?
Anon, what lost ones keep
Their midnight tryst with forms that evil be,
Around the witch-fire in the forest grim !

Clearly the master's plan
Revealed his people, even as they were,
The prayerful elder and the winsome maid,
The errant roisterer, the Puritan,
Dark Pyncheon, mournful Hester,—all are there.
But none save he in our own time so laid
His summons on man's spirit ; none but he,
Whether the light thereof were clear or clouded,
Thus on his canvas fixed the human soul,
The thoughts of mystery,
In deep hearts by this mortal guise enshrouded,
Wild hearts that like the church-bells ring
and toll.

Two natures in him strove
Like day with night, his sunshine and his gloom.
To him the stern forefathers' creed descended,
The weight of some inexorable Jove
Prejudging from the cradle to the tomb ;
But therewithal the lightsome laughter blended
Of that Arcadian sweetness undismayed
Which finds in Love its law, and graces still
The rood, the penitential symbol worn,—
Which sees, beyond the shade,
The Naiad nymph of every rippling rill,
And hears quick Fancy wind her wilful horn.

What if he brooded long
On Time and Fate,—the ominous progression
Of years that with Man's retributions frown,—
The destinies which round his footsteps throng,—
Justice, that heeds not Mercy's intercession,—
Crime, on its own head calling vengeance
down,—
Deaf Chance and blind, that, like the mountain-slide
Puts out Youth's heart of fire and all is dark !
What though the blemish which, in aught of earth,
The maker's hand defied,
Was plain to him,—the one evasive mark
Wherewith Death stamps us for his own at
birth !

Ah, none the less we know
He felt the imperceptible fine thrill
With which the waves of being palpitate
Whether in ecstasy of joy or woe,
And saw the strong divinity of Will
Bringing to halt the stolid tramp of Fate ;

Nor from his work was ever absent quite
The presence which, o'ercast it as we may,
Things far beyond our reason can suggest :
 There was a drifting light
In Donatello's cell,—a fitful ray
 Of sunshine came to hapless Clifford's breast.

 Into such blossom brake
Our northern hedge, that neither mortal sadness
 Nor the drear thought of lives that strive and
 fail,
Nor any hues its sombre leaves might take
From clouded skies, could overcome its gladness
 Or in the blessing of its shade prevail.
Fresh sprays it yielded them of Merry Mount
 For wedding wreaths ; blithe Phœbe with the
 sweet
Pure flowers her promise to her lover gave :
 Beside it, from a fount
Where Pearl and Pansie plashed their innocent
 feet,
A brook ran on and kissed Zenobia's grave.

 Silent and dark the spell
Laid on New England by the frozen North ;
 Long, long the months,—and yet the Winter
 ends,
The snow-wraiths vanish, and rejoicing well
The dandelions from the grass leap forth,
 And Spring through budding birch and willow
 sends
Her wind of Paradise. And there are left
 Poets to sing of all, and welcome still

The robin's voice, the humble-bee's wise drone ;
Nor are we yet bereft
Of one whose sagas ever at his will
Can answer back the ocean, tone for tone.

But he whose quickened eye
Saw through New England's life her inmost
spirit,—

Her heart, and all the stays on which it leant,—
Returns not, since he laid the pencil by
Whose mystic touch none other shall inherit !

What though its work unfinished lies? Half-
bent

The rainbow's arch fades out in upper air ;

The shining cataract half-way down the height
Breaks into mist ; the haunting strain, that fell

On listeners unaware,

Ends incomplete, but through the starry night
The ear still waits for what it did not tell.

THE DEATH OF BRYANT.

THE DEATH OF BRYANT.

HOW was it then with Nature when the soul
Of her own poet heard a voice which came
From out the void, "Thou art no longer lent
To Earth !" when that incarnate spirit, blent
With the abiding force of waves that roll,

Wind-cradled vapours, circling stars that flame,
She did recall ? How went
His antique shade, beacons upon its way
Through the still aisles of night to universal day ?

Her voice it was, her sovereign voice, which bade
The Earth resolve his elemental mould ;
And once more came her summons : " Long, too
long,
Thou lingerest, and charmest with thy song !
Return ! return !" Thus Nature spoke, and made
Her sign ; and forthwith on the minstrel old
An arrow, bright and strong,
Fell from the bent bow of the answering Sun,
Who cried, " The song is closed, the invocation
done !"

But not as for those youths dead ere their prime,
New-entered on their music's high domain,
Then snatched away, did all things sorrow own ;
No utterance now like that sad sweetest tone

When Bion died, and the Sicilian rhyme
 Bewailed ; no sobbing of the reeds that plain,
 Rehearsing some last moan
Of Lycidas ; no strains which skyward swell
For Adonais still, and still for Astrophel !

The Muses wept not for him as for those
 Of whom each vanished like a beauteous star
Quenched ere the shining midwatch of the night ;
The greenwood Nymphs mourned not his lost
 delight ;
Nor Echo, hidden in the tangled close,
 Grieved that she could not mimic him afar.
 He ceased not from our sight
Like him who, in the first glad flight of Spring,
Fell as an eagle pierced with shafts from his own
 wing.

This was not Thyrsis ! no, the minstrel lone
 And reverend, the woodland singer hoar,
Who was dear Nature's nursling, and the priest
Whom most she loved ; nor had his office ceased
But for her mandate : " Seek again thine own ;
 The walks of men shall draw thy steps no more !"
 Softly, as from a feast
The guest departs that hears a low recall,
He went, and left behind his harp and coronal.

" *Return !*" she cried, " unto thine own return !
 Too long the pilgrimage ; too long the dream
In which, lest thou shouldst be companionless,
Unto the oracles thou hadst access—
The sacred groves that with my presence yearn."

The voice was heard by mountain, dell, and
stream,

Meadow and wilderness—

All fair things vested by the changing year,
Which now awoke in joy to welcome one most
dear.

“*He comes!*” declared the unseen ones that haunt
The dark recesses, the infinitude
Of whispering old oaks and soughing pines.

“*He comes!*” the warders of the forest shrines
Sang joyously,—“His spirit ministrant
Henceforth with us shall walk the underwood,
Till mortal ear divines
Its music added to our choral hymn,
Rising and falling far through archways deep and
dim!”

The orchard fields, the hillside pastures green,
Put gladness on; the rippling harvest-wave
Ran like a smile, as if a moment there
His shadow poised in the midsummer air
Above; the cataract took a pearly sheen
Even as it leapt; the winding river gave
A sound of welcome where
He came, and trembled, far as to the sea
It moves from rock-ribbed heights where its dark
fountains be.

His presence brooded on the rolling plain,
And on the lake there fell a sudden calm—
His own tranquillity; the mountain bowed
Its head, and felt the coolness of a cloud,

And murmured, "*He is passing!*" and again
Through all its firs the wind swept like a psalm;
 Its eagles, thunder-browed,
In that mist-moulded shape their kinsman knew,
And circled high, and in his mantle soared from
 view.

So drew he to the living veil, which hung
Of old above the deep's unimaged face,
And sought his own. Henceforward he is free
Of vassalage to that mortality
Which men have given a sepulchre among
 The pathways of their kind—a resting-place
 Where, bending one great knee,
Knelt the proud mother of a mighty land
In tenderness, and came anon a plumèd band.

Came one by one the seasons meetly drest,
To sentinel the relics of their seer.
First Spring—upon whose head a wreath was set
Of wind-flowers and the yellow violet—
Advanced. Then Summer led his loveliest
Of months, one ever to the minstrel dear
 (Her sweet eyes dewy wet),
June, and her sisters, whose brown hands entwine
The brier-rose and the bee-haunted columbine.

Next Autumn, like a monarch sad of heart,
Came, tended by his melancholy days.
Purple he wore, and bore a golden-rod,
His sceptre; and let fall upon the sod
A lone fringed-gentian ere he would depart.

Scarce had his train gone darkling down the
ways

When Winter thither trod—

Winter, with beard and raiment blown before,
That was so seeming like our poet old and hoar.

What forms are these amid the pageant fair,
Harping with hands that falter? What sad
throng?

They wait in vain, a mournful brotherhood,
And listen where their laurelled elder stood
For some last music fallen through the air.

“What cold, thin atmosphere now hears thy
song?”

They ask, and long have wooed
The woods and waves that knew him, but can learn
Naught save the hollow, haunting cry, “*Return !*
Return !”

SONGS.

O LARK ! sweet lark !
Where learn you all your minstrelsy ?
What realms are those to which you fly ?
While robins feed their young from dawn till dark,
You soar on high,—
Forever in the sky.

O child ! dear child !
Above the clouds I lift my wing
To hear the bells of Heaven ring ;
Some of their music, though my flights be wild,
To Earth I bring ;
Then let me soar and sing !

STANZAS FOR MUSIC.

(FROM AN UNFINISHED DRAMA.)

THOU art mine, thou hast given thy word ;
Close, close in my arms thou art clinging ;
Alone for my ear thou art singing
A song which no stranger hath heard :
But afar from me yet, like a bird,
Thy soul, in some region unstirred,
On its mystical circuit is winging.

Thou art mine, I have made thee mine own ;
Henceforth we are mingled for ever :
But in vain, all in vain, I endeavour—
Though round thee my garlands are thrown,
And thou yieldest thy lips and thy zone—
To master the spell that alone
My hold on thy being can sever.

Thou art mine, thou hast come unto me !
But thy soul, when I strive to be near it—
The innermost fold of thy spirit—
Is as far from my grasp, is as free,
As the stars from the mountain-tops be,
As the pearl, in the depths of the sea,
From the portionless king that would wear it.

TOUJOURS AMOUR.

PRITHEE tell me, Dimple-Chin,
At what age does Love begin?
Your blue eyes have scarcely seen
Summers three, my fairy queen,
But a miracle of sweets,
Soft approaches, sly retreats,
Show the little archer there,
Hidden in your pretty hair;
When didst learn a heart to win?
Prithee tell me, Dimple-Chin!

“Oh!” the rosy lips reply,

“I can’t tell you if I try.

’Tis so long I can’t remember :

Ask some younger lass than I !”

Tell, O tell me, Grizzled-Face,
Do your heart and head keep pace?
When does hoary Love expire,
When do frosts put out the fire?
Can its embers burn below
All that chill December snow?
Care you still soft hands to press,
Bonny heads to smooth and bless?
When does Love give up the chase?
Tell, O tell me, Grizzled-Face !

“Ah!” the wise old lips reply,

“Youth may pass and strength may die ;

But of Love I can’t foretoken :

Ask some older sage than I !”

THE WEDDING DAY.

I.

SWEETHEART, name the day for me
When we two shall wedded be :
Make it ere another moon,
While the meadows are in tune
And the trees are blossoming
And the robins mate and sing.
Whisper, love, and name a day
In this merry month of May.

No, no, no,
You shall not escape me so !
Love will not forever wait ;
Roses fade when gathered late.

II.

Fie, for shame, Sir Malcontent !
How can time be better spent
Than in wooing? I would wed
When the clover blossoms red,
When the air is full of bliss
And the sunshine like a kiss.
If you're good, I'll grant a boon :
You shall have me, Sir, in June.

Nay, nay, nay,
Girls for once should have their way !
If you love me, wait till June ;
Rosebuds wither, picked too soon.

VOICE OF THE WESTERN WIND.

VOICE of the western wind !
Thou singest from afar,
Rich with the music of a land
Where all my memories are ;
But in thy song I only hear
The echo of a tone
That fell divinely on my ear
In days forever flown.

Star of the western sky !
Thou beamest from afar,
With lustre caught from eyes I knew,
Whose orbs were each a star ;
But, oh, those eyes—too wildly bright—
No more eclipse thine own,
And never shall I find the light
Of days forever flown !

AT TWILIGHT.

THE sunset darkens in the west,
The sea-gulls haunt the bay,
And far and high the swallows fly
To watch the dying day.
Now where is she that once with me
The rippling waves would list ?
And O for the song I loved so long,
And the darling lips I kist !

Yon twinkling sail may whiter gleam
Than falcon's snowy wing,
Her lances far the evening-star
Beyond the waves may fling ;
Float on, ah float, enchanted boat,
Bear true hearts o'er the main,
But I shall guide thy helm no more,
Nor whisper love again !

SURF.

SPLENDOURS of morning the billow-crests
brighten,
Lighting and luring them on to the land,—
Far-away waves where the wan vessels whiten,
Blue rollers breaking in surf where we stand.
Curved like the necks of a legion of horses,
Each with his froth-gilded mane flowing free,
Hither they speed in perpetual courses,
Bearing thy riches, O beautiful sea !

Strong with the striving of yesterday's surges,
Lashed by the wanton winds leagues from the
shore,
Each, driven fast by its follower, urges
Fearlessly those that are fleeting before ;
How they leap over the ridges we walk on,
Flinging us gifts from the depths of the sea,—
Silvery fish for the foam-hunting falcon,
Palm-weed and pearls for my darling and me !

Light falls her foot where the rift follows after,
Finer her hair than your feathery spray,
Sweeter her voice than your infinite laughter,—
Hist ! ye wild couriers, list, to my lay !
Deep in the chambers of grottoes auroral
Morn laves her jewels and bends her red knee :
Thence to my dear one your amber and coral
Bring for her dowry, O beautiful sea !

AUTUMN SONG.

NO clouds are in the morning sky,
The vapours hug the stream,—
Who says that life and love can die
In all this northern gleam ?
At every turn the maples burn,
The quail is whistling free,
The partridge whirs, and the frosted burs
Are dropping for you and me.
Ho ! hilly ho ! heigh O !
Hilly ho !
In the clear October morning.

Along our path the woods are bold,
And glow with ripe desire ;
The yellow chestnut showers its gold,
The sumachs spread their fire ;
The breezes feel as crisp as steel,
The buckwheat tops are red :
Then down the lane, love, scurry again,
And over the stubble tread !
Ho ! hilly ho ! heigh O !
Hilly ho !
In the clear October morning.

THE FLIGHT OF THE BIRDS.

WHITHER away, Robin,
Whither away?

Is it through envy of the maple-leaf,
Whose blushes mock the crimson of thy breast,
Thou wilt not stay?
The summer days were long, yet all too brief
The happy season thou hast been our guest :
Whither away?

Whither away, Bluebird,
Whither away?

The blast is chill, yet in the upper sky
Thou still canst find the colour of thy wing,
The hue of May.
Warbler, why speed thy southern flight? ah, why,
Thou too, whose song first told us of the Spring?
Whither away?

Whither away, Swallow,
Whither away?

Canst thou no longer tarry in the North,
Here, where our roof so well hath screened thy
nest?
Not one short day?
Wilt thou—as if thou human wert—go forth
And wanton far from them who love thee best?
Whither away?

MADRIGAL.

DORUS TO LYCORIS, WHO REPROVED HIM FOR
INCONSTANCY.

WHY should I constant be?
The bird in yonder tree,
This leafy summer,
Hath not his last year's mate,
Nor dreads to venture fate
With a new-comer.

Why should I fear to sip
The sweets of each red lip?
In every bower
The roving bee may taste
(Lest aught should run to waste)
Each fresh-blown flower.

The trickling rain doth fall
Upon us one and all;
The south-wind kisses
The saucy milkmaid's cheek,
The nun's, demure and meek,
Nor any misses.

Then ask no more of me
That I should constant be
Nor eke desire it;
Take not such idle pains
To hold our love in chains,
Nor coax, nor hire it.

Be all things in thyself,—
A sprite, a tricky elf,
Forever changing,
So that thy latest mood
May ever bring new food
To Fancy ranging.

Forget what thou wast first,
And as I loved thee erst
In soul and feature,
I'll love thee out of mind
When each new morn shall find
Thee a new creature.

THE TRYST.

SLEEPING, I dreamed that thou wast mine,
In some ambrosial lovers' shrine.
My lips against thy lips were pressed,
And all our passion was confessed ;
So near and dear my darling seemed,
I knew not that I only dreamed.

Waking, this mid and moonlit night,
I clasp thee close by lover's right.
Thou fearest not my warm embrace,
And yet, so like the dream thy face
And kisses, I but half partake
The joy, and know not if I wake.

NOCTURNE.

THE silent world is sleeping,
And spirits hover nigh,
With downward pinions keeping
Our love from mortal eye,
Nor any ear of Earth can hear
The heart-beat and the sigh.

Now no more the twilight bird
Showers his triple notes around ;
In the dewy paths is heard
No rude footfall's sound.
In the stillness I await
Thy coming late,
In the dusk would lay my heart
Close to thine own, and say how dear thou art !

O life ! O rarest hour !
When the dark world onward rolls,
And the fiery planets drift,
Then from our commingled souls
Clouds of passion and of power,
Flames of incense, lift !

Come, for the world is turning
To meet the morning star !
Answer my spirit's yearning
And seek the arms that call thee from afar :
Let them close—ah, let them close
Around thee now, and lure thee to repose.

SONG FROM A DRAMA.

I KNOW not if moonlight or starlight
Be soft on the land and the sea,—
I catch but the near light, the far light,
Of eyes that are burning for me ;
The scent of the night, of the roses,
May burden the air for thee, Sweet,—
'Tis only the breath of thy sighing
I know, as I lie at thy feet.

The winds may be sobbing or singing,
Their touch may be fervent or cold,
The night-bells may toll or be ringing,—
I care not, while thee I enfold !
The feast may go on, and the music
Be scattered in ecstasy round,—
Thy whisper, “ I love thee ! I love thee ! ”
Hath flooded my soul with its sound.

I think not of time that is flying,
How short is the hour I have won,
How near is this living to dying,
How the shadow still follows the sun ;
There is naught upon earth, no desire,
Worth a thought, though 't were had by a sign !
I love thee ! I love thee ! bring nigher
Thy spirit, thy kisses, to mine !

SISTER BEATRICE.

*A Legend from the "Sermones Discipuli" of Jean
Herolt, the Dominican, A.D. 1518.*

SISTER BEATRICE.

A CLOISTER tale,—a strange and ancient thing
Long since on vellum writ in gules and or :
And why should Chance to me this trover bring
From the grim dust-heap of forgotten lore,
And not to that gray bard still measuring
His laurelled years by music's golden score,
Nor to some comrade who like him has caught
The charm of lands by me too long unsought?

Why not to one who, with a steadfast eye,
Ingathering her shadow and her sheen,
Saw Venice as she is, and, standing nigh,
Drew from the life that old, dismantled queen?
Or to the poet through whom I well descry
Castile, and the Campeador's demesne?
Or to that eager one whose quest has found
Each place of long renown, the world around ;

Whose foot has rested firm on either hill,—
The sea-girt height where glows the midnight sun,
And wild Parnassus ; whose melodious skill
Has left no song untried, no wreath unwon?
Why not to these? Yet, since by Fortune's will
This quaint task given me I must not shun,
My verse shall render, fitly as it may,
An old church legend, meet for Christmas Day.

Once on a time (so read the monkish pages),
Within a convent—that doth still abide
Even as it stood in those devouter ages,
Near a fair city, by the highway's side—
There dwelt a sisterhood of them whose wages
Are stored in heaven : each a virgin bride
Of Christ, and bounden meekly to endure
In faith, and works, and chastity most pure.

A convent, and within a summer-land,
Like that of Browning and Boccaccio !
Years since, my greener fancy would have planned
Its station thus : it should have had, I trow,
A square and flattened bell-tower, that might stand
Above deep-windowed buildings long and low,
Closed all securely by a vine-clung wall,
And shadowed on one side by cypress tall ;

Within the gate, a garden set with care :
Box-bordered plots, where peach and almond
trees
Rained blossoms on the maidens walking there,
Or rustled softly in the summer breeze ;
Here were sweet jessamine and jonquil rare,
And arbours meet for pious talk at ease ;
There must have been a dove-cote too, I know,
Where white-winged birds like spirits come and go.

Outside, the thrush and lark their music made
Beyond the olive-grove at dewy morn ;
By noon, cicalas, shrilling in the shade
Of oak and ilex, woke the peasant's horn ;

And, at the time when into darkness fade
The vineyards, from their purple depths were
borne
The nightingale's responses to the prayer
Of those sweet saints at vespers, meek and fair.

Such is the place that, with the hand and eye
Which are the joy of youth, I should have
painted.

Say not, who look thereon, that 't is awry—
Like nothing real, by rhymesters' use attained.
Ah well ! then put the faulty picture by,
And help me draw an abbess long since sainted..
Think of your love, each one, and thereby guess
The fashion of this lady's beauteousness.

For in this convent Sister Beatrice,
Of all her nuns the fairest and most young,
Became, through grace and special holiness,
Their sacred head, and moved, her brood among,
Dévôte d'âme et très-fervente au service ;
And thrice each day, their hymns and Aves sung,
At Mary's altar would before them kneel,
Keeping her vows with chaste and pious zeal.

Now in the Holy Church there was a clerk,
A godly-seeming man (as such there be
Whose selfish hearts with craft and guile are dark),
Young, gentle-phrased, of handsome mien and
free.

His passion chose this maiden for its mark,
Begrudging heaven her white chastity,
And with most sacrilegious art the while
He sought her trustful nature to beguile.

Oft as they met, with subtle hardihood

He still more archly played the traitor's part,
And strove to wake that murmur in her blood

That times the pulses of a woman's heart ;
And in her innocence she long withstood

The secret tempter, but at last his art
Changed all her tranquil thoughts to love's desire,
Her vestal flame to earth's unhallowed fire.

So the fair governess, o'ermastered, gave

Herself to the destroyer, yet as one
That slays, in pity, her sweet self, to save

Another from some wretched deed undone ;
But when she found her heart was folly's slave,

She sought the altar which her steps must shun
Thenceforth, and yielded up her sacred trust,
Ere tasting that false fruit which turns to dust.

One eve the nuns beheld her entering

Alone, as if for prayer beneath the rood,
Their chapel-shrine, wherein the offering

And masterpiece of some great painter stood,—
The Virgin Mother, without plume or wing

Ascending, poised in rapt beatitude,
With hands crosswise, and intercession mild
For all who crave her mercy undefiled.

There Beatrice—poor, guilty, desperate maid—

Took from her belt the convent's blessed keys,
And with them on the altar humbly laid

Her missal, uttering such words as these
(Her eyes cast down, and all her soul afraid) :

“ O dearest mistress, hear me on my knees
Confess to thee, in helplessness and shame,
I am no longer fit to speak thy name.

“Take back the keys wherewith in constancy
Thy house and altar I have guarded well !
No more may Beatrice thy servant be,
For earthly love her steps must needs compel.
Forget me in this sore infirmity

When my successor here her beads shall tell.”
This said, the girl withdrew her as she might,
And with her lover fled that selfsame night ;

Fled out, and into the relentless world
Where Love abides, but Love that breedeth
Sorrow,

Where Purity still weeps with pinions furled,
And Passion lies in wait her all to borrow.
From such a height to such abasement whirled

She fled that night, and many a day and morrow
Abode indeed with him for whose embrace
She bartered heaven and her hope of grace.

O fickle will and pitiless desire,
Twin wolves, that raven in a lustful heart
And spare not innocence, nor yield, nor tire,
But youth from joy and life from goodness part ;
That drag an unstained victim to the mire,
Then cast it soiled and hopeless on the mart !
Even so the clerk, once having dulled his longing,
A worse thing did than that first bitter wronging.

The base hind left her, ruined and alone,
Unknowing by what craft to gain her bread
In the hard world that gives to Want a stone.

What marvel that she drifted whither led
The current, that with none to heed her moan
She reached the shore where life on husks is fed,
Sank down, and, in the strangeness of her fall,
Among her fellows was the worst of all !

Thus stranded, her fair body, consecrate
To holiness, was smutched by spoilers rude,
And entered all the seven fiends where late
Abode a seeming angel, pure and good.
What paths she followed in such woeful state,
By want, remorse, and the world's hate pursued,
Were known alone to them whose spacious ken
O'erlooks not even the poor Magdalen.

After black years their dismal change had wrought
Upon her beauty, and there was no stay
By which to hold, some chance or yearning brought
Her vagrant feet along the convent-way ;
And half as in a dream there came a thought
(For years she had not dared to think or pray)
That moved her there to bow her in the dust
And bear no more, but perish as she must.

Crouched by the gate she waited, it is told,
Brooding the past and all of life forlorn,
Nor dared to lift her pallid face and old
Against the passer's pity or his scorn ;
And there perchance had ere another morn
Died of her shame and sorrows manifold,
But that a portress bade her pass within
For solace of her wretchedness or sin.

To whom the lost one, drinking now her fill
Of woe that wakened memories made more drear,
Said, " Was there not one Beatrice, until
Some time now gone, that was an abbess here ?"
" That was ?" the other said. " Is she not still
The convent's head, and still our mistress dear ?
Look ! even now she comes with open hand,
The purest, saintliest lady in the land !"

And Beatrice, uplifting then her eyes,
Saw her own self (in womanhood divine,
It seemed) draw nigh, with holy look and wise,
The aged portress leaving at a sign.
Even while she marvelled at that strange disguise,
There stood before her, radiant, benign,
The blessed Mother of Mercy, all aflame
With light, as if from Paradise she came !

From her most sacred lips, upon the ears
Of Beatrice, these words of wonder fell :
“ Daughter, thy sins are pardoned ; dry thy tears,
And in this house again my mercies tell,
For, in thy stead, myself these woeful years
Have governed here and borne thine office well.
Take back the keys : save thee and me alone
No one thy fall and penance yet hath known ! ”

Even then, as faded out that loveliness,
The abbess, looking down, herself descried
Clean-robed and spotless, such as all confess
To be a saint and fit for Heaven's bride.
So ends the legend, and ye well may guess
(Who, being untempted, walk in thoughtless
pride)
God of His grace can make the sinful pure,
And while earth lasts shall mercy still endure.

SONNETS.

HOPE DEFERRED.

BRING no more flowers and books and precious things !

O speak no more of our belovèd Art,
Of summer haunts,—melodious wanderings
In leafy refuge from this weary mart !
Surely such thoughts were dear unto my heart ;
Now every word a newer sadness brings !
Thus oft some forest-bird, caged far apart
From verdurous freedom, droops his careless wings,
Nor craves for more than food from day to day ;
So long bereft of wildwood joy and song,
Hopeless of all he dared to hope so long,
The music born within him dies away ;
Even the song he loved becomes a pain,
Full-freighted with a yearning all in vain.

THE SWALLOW.

HAD I, my love declared, the tireless wing
That wafts the swallow to her northern skies,
I would not, sheer within the rich surprise
Of full-blown Summer, like the swallow, fling
My coyer being ; but would follow Spring,
Melodious consort, as she daily flies,
Apace with suns, that o'er new woodlands rise
Each morn—with rains her gentler stages bring.

My pinions should beat music with her own ;
 Her smiles and odours should delight me ever,
 Gliding, with measured progress, from the zone
 Where golden seas receive the mighty river,
 Unto yon lichened cliffs, whose ridges sever
 Our Norseland from the Arctic surge's moan.

A MOTHER'S PICTURE.

SHE seemed an angel to our infant eyes !
 Once, when the glorifying moon revealed
 Her who at evening by our pillow kneeled,—
 Soft-voiced and golden-haired, from holy skies
 Flown to her loves on wings of Paradise,—
 We looked to see the pinions half concealed.
 The Tuscan vines and olives will not yield
 Her back to me, who loved her in this wise,
 And since have little known her, but have grown
 To see another mother, tenderly
 Watch over sleeping children of my own.
 Perchance the years have changed her : yet alone
 This picture lingers ; still she seems to me
 The fair young angel of my infancy.

TO BAYARD TAYLOR.

WITH A COPY OF THE ILIAD.

BAYARD, awaken not this music strong,
 While round thy home the indolent sweet
 breeze
 Floats lightly as the summer breath of seas
 O'er which Ulysses heard the Sirens' song.

Dreams of low-lying isles to June belong,
And Circe holds us in her haunts of ease
But later, when these high ancestral trees
Are sere, and such melodious languors wrong
The reddening strength of the autumnal year,
Yields to heroic words thy ear and eye ;—
Intent on these broad pages thou shalt hear
The trumpets' blare, the Argive battle-cry,
And see Achilles hurl his hurtling spear,
And mark the Trojan arrows make reply !

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

BOHEMIA.

A PILGRIMAGE.

I.

WHEN buttercups are blossoming,
The poets sang, *'t is best to wed :*
So all for love we paired in Spring—
Blanche and I—ere youth had sped,
For Autumn's wealth brings Autumn's wane.
Sworn fealty to royal Art
Was ours, and doubly linked the chain,
With symbols of her high domain,
That twined us ever heart to heart ;
And onward, like the Babes in the Wood,
We rambled, till before us stood
The outposts of Bohemia.

II.

For, roaming blithely many a day,
Eftsoons our little hoard of gold,
Like Christian's follies, slipt away,
Unloosened from the pilgrim's hold,
But left us just as blithe and free ;
Whereat our footsteps turned aside
From lord and lady of degree,
And bore us to that brave countree
Where merrily we now abide,—
That proud and humble, poor and grand,
Enchanted, golden Gypsy-Land,
The Valley of Bohemia.

III.

Together from the higher clime,
 By terraced cliff and copse along,
 Adown the slant we stept, in time
 To many another pilgrim's song,
 And came where faded far away,
 Each side, the kingdom's ancient wall,
 From breaking unto dying day ;
 Beyond, the magic valley lay,
 With glimpse of shimmering stream and fall ;
 And here, between twin turrets, ran,
 Built o'er with arch and barbican,
 The entrance to Bohemia.

IV.

Beneath the lichened parapet
 Grim-sculptured Gog and Magog bore
 The Royal Arms,—Hope's Anchor, set
 In azure, on a field of *or*,
 With pendent mugs, and hands that wield
 A lute and tambour, graven clear ;
 What seemed a poet's scroll revealed
 The antique legend of the shield :
Cambrinus. Rex. helde. Massnile. here.
Joyned. with. ye. King. of. Nbetot.
O. worlde-worne. Pilgrim. passe. belowe.
To. entre. fayre. Bohemia.

V.

No churlish warder barred the gate,
 Nor other pass was needed there
 Than equal heart for either fate,
 And barren scrip, and hope to spare.

Through the gray archway, hand in hand,
We walked, beneath the rampart high,
And on within the wondrous land ;
There, changed as by enchanter's wand,
My sweetheart, fairer to the eye
Than ever, moved along serene
In hood and cloak,—a gypsy queen,
Born princess of Bohemia !

VI.

A fairy realm ! where slope and stream,
Champaign and upland, town and grange,
Like shadowy shiftings of a dream,
Forever blend and interchange ;
A magic clime ! where, hour by hour,
Storm, cloud, and sunshine, fleeting by,
Commingle, and, through shine and shower,
Bright castles, lit with rainbows, tower,
Emblazoning the distant sky
With glimmering glories of a land
Far off, yet ever close at hand
As hope, in brave Bohemia.

VII.

On either side the travelled way,
Encampéd along the sunny downs,
The blithesome, bold Bohemians lay ;
Or hid in quaintly-gabled towns,
At smoke-stained inns of musty date,
And spider-haunted attic nooks
In empty houses of the great,
Still smacking of their ancient state,—

Strewn round with pipes and mouldy books,
And robes and buskins over-worn,
That well become the careless scorn
And freedom of Bohemia.

VIII.

For, loving Beauty, and, by chance,
Too poor to make her all in all,
They spurn her half-way maintenance,
And let things mingle as they fall ;
Dissevered from all other climes,
Yet compassing the whole round world,
Where'er are jests, and jousts at rhymes,
True love, and careless, jovial times,
Great souls by jilting Fortune whirled,
Men that were born before their day,
Kingly, without a realm to sway,
Yet monarchs in Bohemia ;

IX.

And errant wielders of the quill ;
And old-world princes, strayed afar,
In thread-bare exile chasing still
The glimpses of a natal star ;
And Woman—taking refuge there
With woman's toil, and trust, and song,
And something of a piquant air
Defiant, as who must and dare
Steer her own shallop, right or wrong.
A certain noble nature schools,
In scorn of smaller, mincing rules,
The maidens of Bohemia.

X.

But we pursued our pilgrimage
Far on, through hazy lengths of road,
Or crumbling cities gray with age ;
And stayed in many a queer abode,
Days, seasons, years,—wherein were born
Of infant pilgrims, one, two, three ;
And ever, though with travel worn,
Nor garnered for the morrow's morn,
We seemed a merry company,—
 We, and the mates whom friendship, or
 What sunshine fell within our door,
 Drew to us in Bohemia.

XI.

For Ambrose—priest without a cure—
Christened our babes, and drank the wine
He blessed, to make the blessing sure ;
And Ralph, the limner—half-divine
The picture of my Blanche he drew,
As Saint Cecilia 'mong the caves,—
She singing ; eyes a holy blue,
Upturned and rapturous ; hair, in hue,
Gold rippled into amber waves.
 There, too, is wayward, wild Annette,
 Danseuse and warbler and grisette,
 True daughter of Bohemia,

XII.

But all by turns and nothing long ;
And Rose, whose needle gains her bread ;
And bookish Sibyl,—she whose tongue
The bees of Hybla must have fed ;

And one—a poet—nowise sage
For self, but gay companion boon
And prophet of the golden age;
He joined us in our pilgrimage
Long since, one early Autumn noon
 When, faint with journeying, we sate
 Within a wayside hostel-gate
 To rest us in Bohemia.

XIII.

In rusty garb, but with an air
Of grace, that hunger could not whelm,
He told his wants, and—"Could we spare
Aught of the current of the realm—
A shilling?"—which I gave; and so
Came talk, and Blanche's kindly smile;
Whereat he felt his heart aglow,
And said: "Lo, here is silver! lo,
Mine host hath ale! and it were vile,
 If so much coin were spent by me
 For bread, when such good company
 Is gathered in Bohemia."

XIV.

Richer than Kaiser on his throne,
A royal stoup he bade them bring;
And so, with many of mine own,
His shilling vanished on the wing;
And many a skyward-floating strain
He sang, we chorusing the lay
Till all the hostel rang again;
But when the day began to wane,

Along the sequel of our way
He kept us pace ; and, since that time,
We never lack for song and rhyme
To cheer us, in Bohemia.

XV.

And once we stopped a twelvemonth, where
Five-score Bohemians began
Their scheme to cheapen bed and fare,
Upon a late-discovered plan ;
“ For see,” they said, “ the sum how small
By which one pilgrim’s wants are met !
And if a host together fall,
What need of any cash at all ? ”
Though how it worked I half forget,
Yet still the same old dance and song
We found,—the kindly, blithesome throng
And joyance of Bohemia.

XVI.

Thus onward through the Magic Land,
With varying chance. But once there past
A mystic shadow o’er our band,
Deeper than Want could ever cast,
For, oh, it darkened little eyes !
We saw our youngest darling die,
Then robed her in her palmer’s guise,
And crossed the fair hands pilgrim-wise,
And, one by one, so tenderly,
Came Ambrose, Sibyl, Ralph, and Rose,
Strewing each sweetest flower that grows
In wildwoods of Bohemia.

XVII.

But last the Poet, sorrowing, stood
Above the tiny clay, and said :
“ Bright little Spirit, pure and good,
Whither so far away hast fled ?
Full soon thou tryest that other sphere :
Whate’er is lacking in our lives
Thou dost attain ; for Heaven is near,
Methinks, to pilgrims wandering here,
As to that one who never strives
 With fortune,—has not come to know
 The pride and pain that dwell so low
 In valleys of Bohemia.”

XVIII.

He ceased, and pointed solemnly
Through western windows ; and we saw
That lustrous castle of the sky
Gleam, touched with flame ; and heard with awe,
About us, gentle whisperings
Of unseen watchers hovering near
Our dead, and rustling angel wings !
Now, whether this or that year brings
The valley’s end, or, haply, here
 Our pilgrimage for life must last,
 We know not ; but a sacred past
 Has hallowed all Bohemia.

PENELOPE.

NOT thus, Ulysses, with a tender word,
 Pretence of state affairs, soft blandishment,
 And halt assurances, canst thou evade
 My heart's discernment. Think not such a film
 Hath touched these aged eyes, to make them lose
 The subtlest mood of those even now adroop,
 Self-conscious, darkling from my nearer gaze.
 Full well I know thy mind, O man of wiles !
 O man of restless yearnings—fate-impelled,
 Fate-conquering—like a waif thrown back and forth
 O'er many waters ! Oft I see thee stand
 At eve, a landmark on the outer cliff,
 Looking far westward ; later, when the feast
 Smokes in the hall, and nimble servants pass
 Great bowls of wine, and ancient Phemeus sings
 The deeds of Peleus' son, thy right hand moves
 Straight for its sword-hilt, like a ship for home ;
 Then, when thou hearest him follow in the song
 Thine own miraculous sojourn of long years
 Through stormy seas, weird islands, and the land
 Of giants, and the gray companions smite
 Their shields, and cry, *What do we longer here ?*
Afloat ! and let the great waves bear us on !
 I know thou growest weary of the realm,
 Thy wife, thy son, the people, and thy fame.

I too have had my longings. Am I not
 Penelope, who, when Ulysses came

To Sparta, and Icarius bade her choose
Betwixt her sire and wooer, veiled her face
And stept upon the galley silver-oared,
And since hath kept thine Ithacensian halls ?
Then when the hateful Helen fled to Troy
With Paris, and the Argive chieftains sailed
Their ships to Aulis, I would have thee go—
Presaging fame, and power, and spoils of war.
So ten years passed ; meanwhile I reared thy son
To know his father's wisdom, and, apart
Among my maidens, wove the yellow wool.
But then, returning one by one, they came,—
The island-princes ; high-born dames of Crete
And Cephalonia saw again their lords ;
Only Ulysses came not ; yet the war
Was over, and his vessels, like a troop
Of cranes in file, had spread their wings for home.
More was unknown. Then many a winter's night
The servants piled great fagots, smeared with tar,
High on the palace-roof ; with mine own hands
I fired the heaps, that, haply, far away
On the dark waters, might my lord take heart
And know the glory of his kingly towers.

So winter passed ; and summer came and went,
And winter and another summer ; then—
Alas, how many weary months and days !
But he I loved came not. Meanwhile thou knowest
Pelasia's noblest chiefs, with kingly gifts
And pledge of dower, gathered in the halls ;
But still this heart kept faithful, knowing yet
Thou wouldst return, though wrecked on alien
shores.

And great Athenè often in my dreams

Shone, uttering words of cheer. But, last of all,
 The people rose, swearing a king should rule,
 To keep their ancient empery of the isles
 Inviolate and thrifty : bade me choose
 A mate, nor longer dally. Then I prayed
 Respite, until the web within my loom,
 Of gold and purple curiously devised
 For old Laertes' shroud, should fall complete
 From hands still faithful to his blood. Thou
 knowest

How like a ghost I left my couch at night,
 Unravelling the labour of the day,
 And warded off the fate, till came that time
 When my lost sea-king thundered in his halls,
 And with long arrows clove the suitors' hearts.
 So constant was I ! now not thirty moons
 Go by, and thou forgettest all. Alas !
 What profit is there any more in love ?
 What thankless sequel hath a woman's faith !

Yet if thou wilt,—in these thy golden years,
 Safe-housed in royalty, like a god revered
 By all the people,—if thou yearnest yet
 Once more to dare the deep and Neptune's hate,
 I will not linger in a widowed age ;
 I will not lose Ulysses, hardly found
 After long vigils ; but will cleave about
 Thy neck, with more than woman's prayers and
 tears,
 Until thou take me with thee. As I left
 My sire, I leave my son, to follow where
 Ulysses goeth, dearer for the strength
 Of that great heart which ever drives him on
 To large experience of newer toils !

Trust me, I will not any hindrance prove,
 But, like Athenè's helm, a guiding star,
 A glory and a comfort ! Oh, be sure
 My heart shall take its lesson from thine own !
 My voice shall cheer the mariners at their oars
 In the night watches ; it shall warble songs,
 Whose music shall o'erpower the luring airs
 Of Nereïd or Siren. If we find
 Those isles thou namest, where the golden fount
 Gives youth to all who taste it, we will drink
 Deep draughts, until the furrows leave thy brow,
 And I shall walk in beauty, as when first
 I saw thee from afar in Sparta's groves.
 But if Charybdis seize our keel, or swift
 Black currents bear us down the noisome wave
 That leads to Hades, till the vessel sink
 In Stygian waters, none the less our souls
 Shall gain the farther shore, and, hand in hand,
 Walk from the strand across Elysian fields,
 'Mong happy thronging shades, that point and say :
 "There go the great Ulysses, loved of gods,
 And she, his wife, most faithful unto death !"

ALECTRYÔN.

GREAT Arês, whose tempestuous godhood
 found
 Delight in those thick-tangled solitudes
 Of Hebrus, watered tracts of rugged Thrace,—
 Great Arês, scouring the Odrysian wilds,
 There met Alectryôn, a Thracian boy,
 Stalwart beyond his years, and swift of foot

To hunt from morn till eve the white-toothed boar.
“What hero,” said the war-God, “joined his blood
With that of Hæmian nymph, to make thy form
So fair, thy soul so daring, and thy thews
So lusty for the contest on the plains
Wherein the fleet Odrysæ tame their steeds?”

From that time forth the twain together chased
The boar, or made their coursers cleave the breadth
Of yellow Hebrus, and, through vales beyond,
Drove the hot leopard foaming to his lair.
And day by day Alectryôn dearer grew
To the God’s restless spirit, till from Thrace
He bore him, even to Olympus ; there
Before him set immortal food and wine,
That fairer youth and lustier strength might serve
His henchman ; bade him bear his arms, and
 cleanse
The crimsoned burnish of his brazen car :
So dwelt the Thracian youth among the Gods.

There came a day when Arês left at rest
His spear, and smoothed his harmful, unhelmed
 brow,
Calling Alectryôn to his side, and said :
“The shadow of Olympus longer falls
Through misty valleys of the lower world ;
The Earth shall be at peace a summer’s night ;
Men shall have calm, and the unconquered host
Peopling the walls of Troas, and the tribes
Of Greece, shall sleep sweet sleep upon their arms ;
For Aphroditê, queen of light and love,
Awaits me, blooming in the House of Fire,
Girt with the cestus, infinite in grace,

Dearer than battle and the joy of war :
She, for whose charms I would renounce the sword
For ever, even godhood, would she wreath
My brows with myrtle, dwelling far from Heaven.
Hêphæstos, the lame cuckold, unto whose
Misshapen squalor Zeus hath given my queen,
To-night seeks Lemnos, and his sooty vault
Roofed by the roaring surge ; wherein, betimes,
He and his Cyclops pound the ringing iron,
Forging great bolts for Zeus, and welding mail,
White-hot, in shapes for Heroes and the Gods.
Do thou, Alectryôn, faithful to my trust,
Hie with me to the mystic House of Fire.
Therein, with wine and fruitage of her isle,
Sweet odours, and all rarest sights and sounds,
My Paphian mistress shall regale us twain.
But when the feast is over, and thou seest
Arês and Aphroditê pass beyond
The portals of that chamber whence all winds
Of love flow ever toward the fourfold Earth,
Watch by the entrance, sleepless, while we sleep ;
And warn us ere the glimpses of the Dawn ;
Lest Hêlios, the spy, may peer within
Our windows, and to Lemnos speed apace,
In envy clamouring to the hobbling smith,
Hêphæstos, of the wrong I do his bed."

Thus Arês ; and the Thracian boy, well pleased,
Swore to be faithful to his trust, and liege
To her, the perfect queen of light and love.
So saying, they reached the fiery, brazen gates,
Encolumned high by Heaven's artisan,
Hêphæstos, rough, begrimed, and halt of foot,—
Yet unto whom was Aphroditê given

By Zeus, because from his misshapen hands
All shapely things found being ; but the gift
Brought him no joyance, nor made pure his fame,
Like those devices which he wrought himself,
Grim, patient, unbeloved.

There passed they in
At portals of the high, celestial House,
And on beyond the starry-golden court,
Through amorous hidden ways, and winding paths
Set round with splendours, to the spangled hall
Of secret audience for noble guests.
Here Charis laboured, so Hêphæstos bade,
Moulding the room's adornments ; here she built
Low couches, framed in ivory, overlain
With skins of pard and panther, and the fleece
Of sheep which graze the low Hesperian isles ;
And in the midst a cedarn table spread,
Whereon the loves of all the elder Gods
Were wrought in gold and silver ; and the light
Of quenchless rubies sparkled over all.
Thus far came Arês and the Alectryôn,
First leaving shield and falchion at the door,
That naught of violence should haunt that air
Serene, but laughter-loving peace, and joys
The meed of Gods, once given men to know.

Then, from her daïs in the utmost hall,
Shone toward them Aphroditê, not by firm,
Imperial footfalls, but in measureless
Procession, even as, wafted by her doves,
She kissed the faces of the yearning waves
From Cyprus to the high Thessalian mount,
Claiming her throne in Heaven ; so light she stapt,
Untended by her Graces ; only he,

Erôs, th' eternal child, with welcomings
Sprang forward to Arês, like a beam of light
Flashed from a coming brightness, ere it comes ;
And the ambrosial mother to his glee
Joined her own joy, coy as she glided near
Arês, till Arês closed her in his arms
An instant, with the perfect love of Gods.
And the wide chamber gleamed with their delight,
And infinite tinkling laughers rippled through
Far halls, wherefrom no boding echoes came.

But when the passion of their meeting fell
To dalliance, the mighty lovers, sunk
Within those ivory couches golden-fleeced,
Made wassail at the wondrous board, and held
Sweet stolen converse till the middle night.
And soulless servitors came gliding in,
Handmaidens, wrought of gold, the marvellous
work

Of lame Hêphæstos ; having neither will,
Nor voice, yet bearing on their golden trays
Lush fruits and Cyprian wine, and, intermixt,
Olympian food and nectar, earth with heaven.
These Erôs and Alectryôn took therefrom,
And placed before the lovers ; and, meanwhile,
Melodious breathings from unfingered lutes,
Warblings from unseen nightingales, and songs
From lips uncrimsoned, scattered music round.
So fled the light-shod moments, hour by hour,
While the grim husband clanged upon his forge
In lurid caverns of the distant isle,
Unboding, and unheeded in his home,
Save with a scornful jest. Till now the crown
Of Artemis shone at her topmost height :

Then rose the impassioned lovers, with rapt eyes
Fixed each on each, and passed beyond the hall,
Through curtains of that chamber whence all winds
Of love flow ever toward the fourfold Earth ;
At whose dim vestibule Alectryôn
Disposed him, mindful of his master's word ;
But Erôs, heavy-eyed, long since had slept,
Deep-muffled in the softness of his plumes.
And all was silence in the House of Fire.

Only Alectryôn, through brazen bars,
Watched the blue East for Eôs, she whose torch
Should warn him of the coming of the Sun.
Even thus he kept his vigils ; but, ere half
Her silvery downward path the Huntress knew,
His senses by that rich immortal food
Grew numbed with languor. Then the shadowy
hall's
Deep columns glimmered, interblent with dreams,—
Thick forests, running waters, darkling caves
Of Thrace ; and half in thought he grasped the bow ;
Hunted once more within his native wilds,
Cheering the hounds ; until before his eyes
The drapery of all nearer pictures fell,
And his limbs drooped. Whereat the imp of Sleep,
Hypnos, who hid him at the outer gate,
Slid in with silken-sandalled feet, and laid
A subtle finger on his lids. And so,
Crouched at the warder-post, Alectryôn slept.

Meanwhile the God and Goddess, recking nought
Of evil, trusting to the faithful boy,
Sank satiate in the calm of trancèd rest.
And past the sleeping warder, deep within

The portals of that chamber whence all winds
Of love flow ever toward the fourfold Earth,
Hypnos kept on, walking, yet half afloat
In the sweet air ; and fluttering with cool wings
Above their couch fanned the reposeful pair
To slumber. Thus, a careless twilight hour,
Unknowing Eôs and her torch, they slept.

Ill-fated rest ! Awake, ye fleet-winged Loves,
Your mistress ! Eôs, rouse the sleeping God,
And warn him of the coming of the Day !
Alectryôn, wake ! In vain : Eôs swept by,
Radiant, a blushing finger on her lips.
In vain ! Close on her flight, from furthest East,
The peering Hêlios drove his lambent car,
Casting the tell-tale beams on earth and sky,
Until Olympos laughed within his light,
And all the House of Fire grew roofed with gold ;
And through its brazen windows Hêlios gazed
Upon the sleeping lovers : thence away
To Lemnos flashed, across the rearward sea,
A messenger, from whom the vengeful smith,
Hêphæstos, learned the story of his wrongs ;
Whence afterward rude scandal spread through
Heaven.

But they, the lovers, startled from sweet sleep
By garish Day, stood timorous and mute,
Even as a regal pair, the hart and hind,
When first the keynote of the clarion horn
Pierces their covert, and the deep-mouthed hound
Bays, following on the trail ; then, with small pause
For amorous partings, sped in diverse ways.
She, Aphroditê, clothed in pearly cloud,

Dropt from Olympos to the eastern shore ;
Thence floated, half in shame, half laughter-pleased,
Southward across the blue Ægæan sea,
That had a thousand little dimpling smiles
At her discomfort, and a thousand eyes
To shoot irreverent glances. But her conch
Passed the Eubœan coast, and softly on
By rugged Dêlos, and the gentler slope
Of Naxos, to Icarian waves serene ;
Thence sailed betwixt fair Rhodos, on the left,
And windy Carpathos, until it touched
Cyprus ; and soon the conscious Goddess found
Her bower in the hollow of the isle ;
And wondering nymphs in their white arms received
Their white-armed mistress, bathing her fair limbs
In fragrant dew, twining her lucent hair
With roses, and with kisses soothing her ;
Till, glowing in fresh loveliness, she sank
To stillness, tended in the sacred isle,
And hid herself awhile from all her peers.

But angry Arês faced the treacherous Morn,
Spurning the palace tower ; nor looked behind,
Disdainful of himself and secret joys
That stript him to the laughter of the Gods.
Toward the East he made, and overhung
The broad Thermaic gulf ; then, shunning well
The crags of Lemnos, by Mount Athôs stayed
A moment, mute ; thence hurtled sheer away,
Across the murmuring Northern sea, whose waves
Are swollen in billows ruffled with the cuffs
Of endless winds ; so reached the shores of Thrace
And spleen pursued him in the tangled wilds.

Hither at eventide remorseful came
Alectryôn ; but the indignant God,
With harsh revilings, changed him to the Cock,
That evermore, remembering his fault,
Heralds with warning voice the coming Day.

APOLLO.

VAINLY, O burning Poets !
Ye wait for his inspiration,
Even as kings of old
Stood by the oracle-gates.
*Hasten back, he will say, hasten back
To your provinces far away !
There, at my own good time,
Will I send my answer to you.*
Are ye not kings of song ?
At last the god cometh !
The air runs over with splendour ;
The fire leaps high on the altar ;
Melodious thunders shake the ground.
Hark to the Delphic responses !
Hark ! it is the god !

HELIOTROPE.

I WALK in the morning twilight,
Along a garden-slope,
To the shield of moss encircling
My beautiful Heliotrope.

O sweetest of all the flowerets
That bloom where angels tread !
But never such marvellous odour
From heliotrope was shed,

As the passionate exhalation,
The dew of celestial wine,
That floats in tremulous langour
Around this darling of mine.

For, only yester-even,
I saw the dearest scene !
I heard the delicate footfall,
The step of my love, my queen.

Along the walk she glided :
I made no sound nor sign,
But ever, at the turning
Of her star-white neck divine,

I shrunk in the shade of the cypress,
And crouched in the swooning grass,
Like some Arcadian shepherd
To see an Oread pass.

But when she came to the border
At the end of the garden-slope,
She bent, like a rose-tree, over
That beautiful Heliotrope.

The cloud of its subtile fragrance
Entwined her in its wreath,
And all the while commingled
With the incense of her breath.

And so she glistened onward,
Far down the long parterre,
Beside the statue of Hesper,
And a hundred times more fair.

But ah ! her breath had added
The perfume that I find
In this, the sweetest of flowerets,
And the paragon of its kind.

I drink deep draughts of its nectar ;
I faint with love and hope !
Oh, what did she whisper to you,
My beautiful Heliotrope ?

PROVENÇAL LOVERS.

AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE.

WITHIN the garden of Beaucaire
He met her by a secret stair,—
The night was centuries ago.
Said Aucassin, “ My love, my pet,
These old confessors vex me so !
They threaten all the pains of hell
Unless I give you up, ma belle ; ”—
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

“ Now, who should there in heaven be
To fill your place, ma très-douce mie ?
To reach that spot I little care !
There all the droning priests are met ;—

All the old cripples; too, are there
That unto shrines and altars cling
To filch the Peter-pence we bring ;"—
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

"There are the barefoot monks and friars
With gowns well tattered by the briars,
The saints who lift their eyes and whine :
I like them not—a starveling set !
Who'd care with folk like these to dine ?
The other road 'twere just as well
That you and I should take, ma belle !"—
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

"To purgatory I would go
With pleasant comrades whom we know,
Fair scholars, minstrels, lusty knights
Whose deeds the land will not forget,
The captains of a hundred fights,
The men of valour and degree :
We'll join that gallant company,"—
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

"There, too, are jousts and joyance rare,
And beauteous ladies debonair,
The pretty dames, the merry brides,
Who with their wedded lords coquette
And have a friend or two besides,—
And all in gold and trappings gay,
With furs, and crests in vair and gray ;"—
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

"Sweet players on the cithern strings,
And they who roam the world like kings,

Are gathered there, so blithe and free !
Pardie ! I'd join them now, my pet,
If you went also, ma douce mie !
The joys of heaven I'd forego
To have you with me there below,"—
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

EDGED TOOLS.

WELL, Helen, quite two years have flown
Since that enchanted, dreamy night,
When you and I were left alone,
And wondered whether they were right
Who said that each the other loved ;
And thus debating, yes and no,
And half in earnest, as it proved,
We bargained to pretend 'twas so.

Two sceptic children of the world,
Each with a heart engraven o'er
With broken love-knots, quaintly curled,
Of hot flirtations held before ;
Yet, somehow, either seemed to find,
This time, a something more akin
To that young, natural love,—the kind
Which comes but once, and breaks us in.

What sweetly stolen hours we knew,
And frolics perilous as gay !
Though lit in sport, Love's taper grew
More bright and burning day by day.

We knew each heart was only lent,
The other's ancient scars to heal :
The very thought a pathos blent
With all the mirth we tried to feel.

How bravely, when the time to part
Came with the wanton season's close,
Though nature with our mutual art
Had mingled more than either chose,
We smothered Love, upon the verge
Of folly, in one last embrace,
And buried him without a dirge,
And turned, and left his resting-place.

Yet often (tell me what it means !)
His spirit steals upon me here,
Far, far away from all the scenes
His little lifetime held so dear ;
He comes : I hear a mystic strain
In which some tender memory lies ;
I dally with your hair again ;
I catch the gleam of violet eyes.

Ah, Helen ! how have matters been
Since those rude obsequies, with you ?
Say, is my partner in the sin
A sharer of the penance too ?
Again the vision's at my side :
I drop my head upon my breast,
And wonder if he really died,
And why his spirit will not rest.

ESTELLE.

“How came he mad?”—HAMLET.

OF all the beautiful demons who fasten on
human hearts
To fetter the bodies and souls of men with ex-
quisite, mocking arts,
The cruellest, and subtlest, and fairest to mortal
sight,
Is surely a woman called Estelle, who tortures me
day and night.

The first time that I saw her she passed with sweet
lips mute,
As if in scorn of the vacant praise of those who
made her suit ;
A hundred lustres flashed and shone as she rustled
through the crowd,
And a passion seized me for her there,—so passion-
less and proud.

The second time that I saw her she met me face to
face ;
Her bending beauty answered my bow in a tremu-
lous moment's space ;
With an upward glance that instantly fell she read
me through and through,
And found in me something worth her while to idle
with and subdue ;

Something, I know not what : perhaps the spirit of
eager youth,
That named her a queen of queens at once, and
loved her in very truth ;
That threw its pearl of pearls at her feet, and
offered her, in a breath,
The costliest gift a man can give from his cradle to
his death.

The third time that I saw her---this woman called
Estelle---
She passed her milk-white arm through mine and
dazzled me with her spell ;
A blissful fever thrilled my veins, and there, in the
moonbeams white,
I yielded my soul to the fierce control of that
maddening delight !

And at many a trysting afterwards she wove my
heart-strings round
Her delicate fingers, twisting them, and chanting
low as she wound ;
The rune she sang rang sweet and clear like the
chime of a witch's bell ;
Its echo haunts me even now, with the word,
Estelle ! Estelle !

Ah, then, as a dozen before me had, I lay at last at
her feet,
And she turned me off with a calm surprise when
her triumph was all complete :
It made me wild, the stroke which smiled so pitiless
out of her eyes,
Like lightning fallen, in clear noonday, from
cloudless and bluest skies !

The whirlwind followed upon my brain and beat
my thoughts to rack :

Who knows the many a month I lay ere memory
floated back ?

Even now, I tell you, I wonder whether this
woman called Estelle

Is flesh and blood, or a beautiful lie, sent up from
the depths of hell.

For at night she stands where the pallid moon
streams into this grated cell,

And only gives me that mocking glance when I
speak her name—*Estelle* !

With the old restless longing often I strive to
clasp her there,

But she vanishes from my open arms and hides I
know not where.

And I hold that if she were human she could not
fly like the wind,

But her heart would flutter against my own, in spite
of her scornful mind :

Yet, oh ! she is not a phantom, since devils are not
so bad

As to haunt and torture a man long after their
tricks have made him mad !

ANONYMA.

HER CONFESSION.

IF I had been a rich man's girl,
With my tawny hair, and this wanton art
Of lifting my eyes in the evening whirl
And looking into another's heart ;

Had love been mine at birth, and friends
Caressing and guarding me night and day,
With doctors to watch my finger-ends,
And a parson to teach me how to pray ;

If I had been reared as others have,—
With but a tithe of these looks, which came
From my reckless mother, now in her grave,
And the father who grudged me even his name,—
Why, I should have station and tender care,
Should ruin men in the high-bred way,
Passionless, smiling at their despair,
And marrying where my vantage lay.

As it is, I must have love and dress,
Jewelled trinkets, and costly food,
For I was born for plenteousness,
Music and flowers, and all things good.
To that same father I owe some thanks,
Seeing, at least, that blood will tell,
And keep me ever above the ranks
Of those who wallow where they fell.

True, there are weary, weary days
In the great hotel where I make my lair,
Where I meet the men with their brutal praise,
Or answer the women, stare for stare.
'Tis an even fight, and I'll carry it through,—
Pit them against me, great and small :
I grant no quarter, nor would I sue
For grace to the softest of them all.

I cannot remember half the men
Whose sin has tangled them in my toils,—

All are alike before me then,
Part of my easily conquered spoils :
Tall or short, and dark or fair,
Rich or famous, haughty or fond,
There are few, I find, who will not forswear
The lover's oath and the wedding bond.

Fools ! what is it that drives them on
With their perjured lips on poison fed ;
Vain of themselves, and cruel as stone,
How should they be so cheaply led ?
Surely they know me as I am,—
Only a cuckoo, at the best,
Watching, careless of hate and shame,
To crouch myself in another's nest.

But the women,—how they flutter and flout,
The stupid, terribly virtuous wives,
If I but chance to move about
Or enter within their bustling hives !
Buz ! buz ! in the scandalous gatherings,
When a strange queen lights amid their throng,
And their tongues have a thousand angry stings
To send her travelling, right or wrong.

Well, the earth is wide and open to all,
And money and men are everywhere,
And, as I roam, 'twill ill befall
If I do not gain my lawful share :
One drops off, but another will come
With as light a head and heavy a purse ;
So long as I have the world for a home,
I'll take my fortune, better or worse !

REFUGE IN NATURE.

WHEN the rude world's relentless war has
pressed
Fiercely upon them, and the hot campaign
Closes with battles lost, some yield their lives,
Or linger in the ruins of the fight—
Unwise, and comprehending not their fate,
Nor gathering that affluent recompense
Which the all-pitying Earth has yet in store.
Surely such men have never known the love
Of Nature ; nor had recourse to her fount
Of calm delights, whose influences heal
The wounded spirits of her vanquished sons ;
Nor ever—in those fruitful earlier days,
Wherein her manifest forms do most enrich
Our senses void of subtler cognizance—
Wandered in summer fields, climbed the free hills,
Pursued the murmuring music of her streams,
And found the borders of her sounding sea.

Black slander, and the meannesses of friends
Have made the bustling practice of the world
To thee a discord and a mockery ;
Or even if that last extremest pang
Be thine, and, added to such other woes,
The loss of that for ever faithful love
Which else had balanced all : the putting out,
Untimely, of the light in dearest eyes ;—
At such a time thou well may'st count the days
Evil, and for a season quit the field ;
Yet not surrendering all human hopes,
Nor the rich physical life which still remains
God's boon and thy sustainer. It were base
To join alliance with the hosts of Fate
Against thyself, crowning their victory
By loose despair, or seeking rest in death.

More wise, betake thee to those sylvan haunts
Thou knewest when young, and, once again a
child,
Let their perennial loveliness renew
Thy natural faith and childhood's heart serene.
Forgetting all the toilsome pilgrimage,
Awake from strife and shame, as from a dream
Dreamed by a boy, when under waving trees
He sleeps and dreams a languid afternoon.
Once more from these harmonious beauties gain
Repose and ransom, and a power to feel
The immortal gladness of inanimate things.

There is the mighty Mother, ever young
And garlanded, and welcoming her sons.
There are her thousand charms to soothe thy pain,
And merge thy little, individual woe

In the broad health and happy fruitfulness
Of all that smiles around thee. For thy sake
The woven arches of her forests breathe
Perpetual anthems, and the blue skies smile
Between, to heal thee with their infinite hope.
There are her crystal waters : lave thy brows,
Hot with long turmoil, in their purity ;
Wash off the battle-dust from those poor limbs
Blood-stained and weary. Holy sleep shall come
Upon thee ; waking, thou shalt find in bloom
The lilies, fresh as in the olden days ;
And once again, when Night unveils her stars,
Thou shalt have sight of their high radiance,
And feel the old, mysterious awe subdue
The phantoms of thy pain.

And from that height
A voice shall whisper of the faith, through which
A man may act his part until the end.
Anon thy ancient yearning for the fight
May come once more, tempered by poise of
 chance,
And guided well with all experience.
Invisible hands may gird thy armour on,
And Nature put new weapons in thy hands,
Sending thee out to try the world again,—
Perchance to conquer, being cased in mail
Of double memories ; knowing smaller griefs
Can add no sorrow to the woeful past ;
And that, howbeit thou mayest stand or fall,
Earth proffers men her refuge everywhere,
And Heaven's promise is for aye the same.

THE MOUNTAIN.

TWO thousand feet in air it stands
Betwixt the bright and shaded lands,
Above the regions it divides
And borders with its furrowed sides.
The seaward valley laughs with light
Till the round sun o'erhangs this height ;
But then the shadow of the crest
No more the plains that lengthen west
Enshrouds, yet slowly, surely creeps
Eastward, until the coolness steep
A darkling league of tith and wold,
And chills the flocks that seek their fold.

Not like those ancient summits lone,
Mont Blanc, on his eternal throne,—
The city-gemmed Peruvian peak,—
The sunset-portals landmen seek,
Whose train, to reach the Golden Land,
Crawls slow and pathless through the sand,—
Or that, whose ice-lit beacon guides
The mariner on tropic tides,
And flames across the Gulf afar,
A torch by day, by night a star,—
Not thus, to cleave the outer skies,
Does my serener mountain rise,
Nor aye forget its gentle birth
Upon the dewy, pastoral earth.

But ever, in the noonday light,
Are scenes whereof I love the sight,—
Broad pictures of the lower world
Beneath my gladdened eyes unfurled.
Irradiate distances reveal
Fair nature wed to human weal ;
The rolling valley made a plain ;
Its chequered squares of grass and grain ;
The silvery rye, the golden wheat,
The flowery elders where they meet,—
Ay, even the springing corn I see,
And garden haunts of bird and bee ;
And where, in daisied meadows, shines
The wandering river through its vines,
Move specks at random, which I know
Are herds a-grazing to and fro.

Yet still a goodly height it seems
From which the mountain pours his streams
Or hinders, with caressing hands,
The sunlight seeking other lands.
Like some great giant, strong and proud,
He fronts the lowering thunder-cloud,
And wrests its treasures, to bestow
A guerdon on the realm below ;
Or, by the deluge roused from sleep
Within his bristling forest-keep,
Shakes all his pines, and far and wide
Sends down a rich, imperious tide.
At night the whistling tempests meet
In tryst upon his topmost seat,
And all the phantoms of the sky
Frolic and gibber, storming by.

By day I see the ocean-mists
Float with the current where it lists,
And from my summit I can hail
Cloud-vessels passing on the gale,—
The stately argosies of air,—
And parley with the helmsmen there ;
Can probe their dim, mysterious source,
Ask of their cargo and their course,—
Whence come ? where bound ?—and wait reply,
As, all sails spread, they hasten by.

If, foiled in what I fain would know,
Again I turn my eyes below
And eastward, past the hither mead
Where all day long the cattle feed,
A crescent gleam my sight allures
And clings about the hazy moors,—
The great, encircling, radiant sea,
Alone in its immensity.

Even there, a queen upon its shore,
I know the city evermore
Her palaces and temples rears,
And woos the nations to her piers ;
Yet the proud city seems a mole
To this horizon-bounded whole ;
And, from my station on the mount,
The whole is little worth account
Beneath the overhanging sky,
That seems so far and yet so nigh.
Here breathe I inspiration rare,
Unburdened by the grosser air
That hugs the lower land, and feel
Through all my finer senses steal

The life of what that life may be,
Freed from this dull earth's density,
When we, with many a soul-felt thrill,
Shall thrid the ether at our will,
Through widening corridors of morn
And starry archways swiftly borne.

Here, in the process of the night,
The stars themselves a purer light
Give out, than reaches those who gaze
Enshrouded with the valley's haze.
October, entering Heaven's fane,
Assumes her lucent, annual reign :
Then what a dark and dismal clod,
Forsaken by the Sons of God,
Seems this sad world, to those which march
Across the high, illumined arch,
And with their brightness draw me forth
To scan the splendours of the North !
I see the Dragon, as he toils
With Ursa in his shining coils,
And mark the Huntsman lift his shield,
Confronting on the ancient field
The Bull, while in a mystic row
The jewels of his girdle glow ;
Or, haply, I may ponder long
On that remoter, sparkling throng,
The orient sisterhood, around
Whose chief our Galaxy is wound ;
Thus, half enwrapt in classic dreams,
And brooding over Learning's gleams,
I leave to gloom the under-land,
And from my watch-tower, close at hand,
Like him who led the favoured race,
I look on glory face to face !

So, on the mountain-top, alone,
I dwell, as one who holds a throne ;
Or prince, or peasant, him I count
My peer, who stands upon a mount,
Sees farther than the tribes below,
And knows the joys they cannot know ;
And, though beyond the sound of speech
They reign, my soul goes out to reach,
Far on their noble heights elsewhere,
My brother-monarchs of the air.

*NEWS FROM OLYMPIA.**

OLYMPIA? Yes, strange tidings from the city
Which pious mortals builded, stone by stone,
For those old gods of Hellas, half in pity
Of their storm-mantled height and dwelling
lone,—

Their seat upon the mountain overhanging
Where Zeus withdrew behind the rolling cloud,
Where crowned Apollo sang, the phorminx twanging,
And at Poseidon's word the forests bowed.

Ay, but that fated day
When from the plain Olympia passed away ;
When ceased the oracles, and long unwept
Amid their fanes the gods deserted fell,
While sacerdotal ages, as they slept,
The ruin covered well !

* "One after the other the figures described by Pausanias are dragged from the earth. Niké has been found ; the head of Kladeos is there ; Myrtilos is announced, and Zeus will soon emerge. This is earnest of what may follow."—*Despatch to the "Times."*

The pale Jew flung his cross, thus one has written,
Among them as they sat at the high feast,
And saw the gods, before that token smitten,
Fade slowly, while His presence still increased,
Until the seas Ionian and Ægæan
Gave out a cry that Pan himself was dead,
And all was still : thenceforth no more the pæan,
No more by men the prayer to Zeus was said.

Sank, like a falling star,
Hephaistos in the Lemnian waters far ;
The silvery Huntress fled the darkened sky ;
Dim grew Athene's helm, Apollo's crown ;
Alpheios' nymphs stood wan and trembling by
When Hera's fane went down.

News ! what news ? Has it in truth then ended,
The term appointed for that wondrous sleep ?
Has Earth so well her fairest brood defended
Within her bosom ? Was their slumber deep
Not this our dreamless rest that knows no waking,
But that to which the years are as a day ?
What ! are they coming back, their prison break-
ing,—
These gods of Homer's chant, of Pindar's lay ?

Are they coming back in might,
Olympia's gods, to claim their ancient right ?
Shall then the sacred majesty of old,
The grace that holy was, the noble rage,
Temper our strife, abate our greed for gold,
Make fine the modern age ?

Yes, they are coming back, to light returning !
Bold are the hearts and void of fear the hands
That toil, the lords of War and Spoil unurning,
Or of their sisters fair that break the bands ;
That loose the sovran mistress of desire,
Queen Aphrodite, to possess the earth
Once more ; that dare renew dread Hera's ire,
And rouse old Pan to wantonness of mirth.

The herald Niké, first,
From the dim resting-place unfettered burst,
Winged victor over fate and time and death !
Zeus follows next, and all his children then ;
Phoibos awakes and draws a joyous breath,
And Love returns to men.

Ah, let them come, the glorious Immortals,
Rulers no more, but with mankind to dwell,
The dear companions of our hearts and portals,
Voiceless, unworshipped, yet beloved right well !
Pallas shall sit enthroned in wisdom's station,
Eros and Psyche be for ever wed,
And still the primal loveliest creation
Yield new delight from ancient beauty bred.

Triumphant as of old,
Changeless while Art and Song their warrant hold,
The visions of our childhood haunt us still,
Still Hellas sways us with her charm supreme.
The morn is past, but Man has not the will
To banish yet the dream.

MONTAGU.

QUEEN Katherine of Arragon
In gray Kimbolton dwelt,
A joyous bride, ere bluff King Hal
To Anne's fresh beauty knelt.

Still in her haughty Spanish eyes
Their childhood's lustre shone,
That lit with love two royal hearts,
And won the English throne.

From gray Kimbolton's castle-gate
She rode, each summer's day,
And blithely led the greenwood chase
With hawk and hound away.

And ever handsome Montagu,
Her Master of the Horse,
To guard his mistress kept her pace
O'er heather, turf, and gorse.

Oh, who so brave as Montagu
To leap the hedges clear !
And who so fleet as he to find
The coverts of the deer !

And who so wild as Montagu,
To seek his sovereign's love !
More hopeless than a child, who craves
The brightest star above.

Day after day her presence fed
The fever at his heart ;
Yet loyally the young knight scorned
To play a traitor's part.

Only, when at her palfrey's side
He bowed him by command,
Lightening her footfall to the earth,
He pressed her dainty hand ;

A tender touch, as light as love,
Soft as his heart's desire ;
But aye, in Katherine's artless blood,
It woke no answering fire.

King Hal to gray Kimbolton came
Erelong, and true love's sign,
Unused in colder Arragon,
She prayed him to divine :

" Canst tell me, Sire," she said, " what mean
The gentry of your land,
When softly, thus, and thus, they take
And press a lady's hand ? "

" Ha ! ha !" laughed Hal, " but tell me, Chick,
Each answering in course,
Do any press your hand ? " " Oh yes,
My Master of the Horse."

Off to the wars her gallant went,
And pushed the foremost dikes,
And gashed his fair young form against
A score of Flemish pikes.

Heart's blood ebb'd fast ; but Montagu,
Dipping a finger, wove
These red words in his shield : " Dear Queen,
I perish of your love ! "

Kimbolton, after many a year,
Again met Katherine's view :
The banished wife, with half a sigh,
Remembered Montagu.

THE DUKE'S EXEQUY.

ARRAS, A.D. 1404.

CLOTHED in sable, crowned with gold,
All his wars and councils ended,
Philip lay, surnamed The Bold :
Passing-bell his quittance tolled,
And the chant of priests ascended.

Mailed knights and archers stand,
Thronging in the church of Arras ;
Nevermore at his command
Shall they scour the Netherland,
Nevermore the outlaws harass ;

Naught is left of his array
Save a barren territory ;
Forty years of generous sway
Sped his princely hoards away,
Bartered all his gold for glory.

Forth steps Flemish Margaret then,
Striding toward the silent ashes ;
And the eyes of armèd men
Fill with startled wonder, when
On the bier her girdle clashes !

Swift she drew it from her waist,
And the purse and keys it carried
On the ducal coffin placed ;
Then with proud demeanour faced
Sword and shield of him she married.

“No encumbrance of the dead
Must the living clog for ever ;
From thy debts and dues,” she said,
“From the liens of thy bed,
We this day our line dissever.

“From thy hand we gain release,
Know all present by this token !
Let the dead repose in peace,
Let the claims upon us cease
When the ties that bound are broken.

“Philip, we have loved thee long,
But, in years of future splendour,
Burgundy shall count among
Bravest deeds of tale and song
This, our widowhood’s surrender.”

Back the stately Duchess turned,
While the priests and friars chanted,
And the swinging incense burned :
Thus by feudal rite was earned
Greatness for a race undaunted.

ALL IN A LIFETIME.

THOU shalt have sun and shower from heaven
 above,
 Thou shalt have flower and thorn from earth
 below,
Thine shall be foe to hate and friend to love,
 Pleasures that others gain, the ills they know,—
 And all in a lifetime.

Hast thou a golden day, a starlit night,
 Mirth, and music, and love without alloy?
Leave no drop undrunken of thy delight :
 Sorrow and shadow follow on thy joy.
 'Tis all in a lifetime.

What if the battle end and thou hast lost?
 Others have lost the battles thou hast won ;
Haste thee, bind thy wounds, nor count the cost :
 Over the field will rise to-morrow's sun.
 'Tis all in a lifetime.

Laugh at the braggart sneer, the open scorn,—
 'Ware of the secret stab, the slanderous lie :
For seventy years of turmoil thou wast born,
 Bitter and sweet are thine till these go by.
 'Tis all in a lifetime.

Reckon thy voyage well, and spread the sail,—
Wind and calm and current shall warp thy way ;
Compass shall set thee false, and chart shall fail ;
Ever the waves will use thee for their play.
'Tis all in a lifetime.

Thousands of years ago were chance and change,
Thousands of ages hence the same shall be ;
Naught of thy joy and grief is new or strange :
Gather apace the good that falls to thee !
'Tis all in a lifetime !

“*SI JEUNESSE SAVAIT !*”

HOW slow, how sure, how swift,
The sands within each glass,
The brief, illusive moments, pass !
Half unawares we mark their drift
Till the awakened heart cries out,—Alas !
Alas, the fair occasion fled,
The precious chance to action all unwed !
And murmurs in its depths the old refrain,—
Had we but known betimes what now we know in
vain !

When the veil from the eyes is lifted
The seer's head is gray ;
When the sailor to shore has drifted
The sirens are far away.
Why must the clearer vision,
The wisdom of Life's late hour,
Come, as in Fate's derision,
When the hand has lost its power ?

Is there a rarer being
Is there a fairer sphere
Where the strong are not unseeing,
And the harvests are not sere ;
Where, ere the seasons dwindle
They yield their due return ;
Where the lamps of knowledge kindle
While the flames of youth still burn ?
Oh for the young man's chances !
Oh for the old man's will !
Those flee while this advances,
And the strong years cheat us still.

CRABBED AGE AND YOUTH.

OUT, out, Old Age ! aroint ye !
I fain would disappoint ye,
Nor wrinkled grow and learned
Before I am inurned.
Ruthless the Hours and hoary,
That scatter ills before ye !
Thy touch is pestilential,
Thy lays are penitential ;
With stealthy steps thou stealest
And life's hot tide congealest ;
Before thee vainly flying
We are already dying.
Why must the blood grow colder,
And men and maidens older ?
Bring not thy maledictions,
Thy grewsome, grim afflictions,—

Thy bodings bring not hither
To make us blight and wither.
When this thy frost hath bound us,
All fairer things around us
Seem Youth's divine extortion
In which we have no portion.
"Fie, Senex!" saith a lass now,
"What need ye of a glass now?
Though flowers of May be springing
And I my songs am singing,
Thy blood no whit the faster
Doth flow, my ancient Master!"
Age is by Youth delighted,
Youth is by Age affrighted;
Blithe sunny May and joysome
Still finds December noisome.
Alack! a guest unbidden,
Howe'er our feast be hidden,
Doth enter with the feaster
And make a Lent of Easter!
I would thou wert not able
To seat thee at our table;
I would that altogether
From this thy wintry weather,
Since Youth and Love must leave us,
Death might at once retrieve us.
Old wizard, ill betide ye!
I cannot yet abide ye!

Ah, Youth, sweet Youth, I love ye!
There's naught on Earth above ye!
Thou purling bird uncaged
That never wilt grow aged,

To whom each day is giving
Increase of joyous living !
Soft words to thee are spoken,
For thee strong vows are broken,
All loves and lovers cluster,
To bask them in thy lustre.
Ah, girlhood, pout and dimple,
Half hid beneath the wimple !
Ah, boyhood, blithe and cruel,
Whose heat doth need no fuel,
No help of wine and spices
And frigid Eld's devices !
All pleasant things ye find you,
And to your sweet selves bind you.
For you alone the motion
Of brave ships on the ocean ;
All stars for you are shining,
All wreaths your foreheads twining ;
All joys, your joys decreeing,
Are portions of your being,—
All fairest sights your features,
Ye selfish, soulful creatures !
Sing me no more distiches
Of glory, wisdom, riches ;
Tell me no beldame's story
Of wisdom, wealth, and glory !
To Youth these are a wonder,—
To Age a corpse-light under
The tomb with rusted portal
Of that which seemed immortal.
I, too, in Youth's dear fetter,
Will love my foeman better,—
Ay, though his ill I study,—
So he be young and ruddy,

Than comrade true and golden,
So he be waxen olden.
Ah, winsome Youth, stay by us !
I prithee, do not fly us !
Ah, Youth, sweet Youth, I love ye !
There's naught on Earth above ye !

THE SONGSTER.

A MIDSUMMER CAROL.

I.

WITHIN our summer hermitage
I have an aviary,—
'Tis but a little, rustic cage,
That holds a golden-winged Canary,—
A bird with no companion of his kind.
But when the warm south-wind
Blows, from rathe meadows, over
The honey-scented clover,
I hang him in the porch, that he may hear
The voices of the bobolink and thrush,
The robin's joyous gush,
The bluebird's warble, and the tunes of all
Glad matin songsters in the fields anear.
Then, as the blithe responses vary,
And rise anew, and fall,
In every hush
He answers them again,
With his own wild, reliant strain,
As if he breathed the air of sweet Canary.

II.

Bird, bird of the golden wing,
Thou lithe, melodious thing !

Where hast thy music found ?
What fantasies of vale and vine,
Of glades where orchids intertwine,
Of palm-trees, garlanded and crowned,
And forests flooded deep with sound,—

What high imagining
Hath made this carol thine ?
By what instinct art thou bound
To all rare harmonies that be
In those green islands of the sea,
Where thy radiant, wildwood kin
Their madrigals at morn begin,
Above the rainbow and the roar
Of the long billow from the Afric shore ?

Asking other guerdon
None, than Heaven's light,
Holding thy crested head aright,
Thy melody's sweet burden
Thou dost proudly utter,
With many an ecstatic flutter
And ruffle of thy tawny throat
For each delicious note.
—Art thou a waif from Paradise,
In some fine moment wrought
By an artist of the skies,
Thou winged, cherubic Thought ?

Bird of the amber beak,
Bird of the golden wing !

Thy dower is thy carolling ;
 Thou hast not far to seek
 Thy bread, nor needest wine
To make thine utterance divine ;
Thou art canopied and clothed
 And unto Song betrothed !
In thy lone aërial cage
Thou hast thine ancient heritage ;
There is no task-work on thee laid
But to rehearse the ditties thou hast made ;
 Thou hast a lordly store,
And, though thou scatterest them free,
 Art richer than before,
 Holding in fee
The glad domain of minstrelsy.

III.

Brave songster, bold Canary !
Thou art not of thy listeners wary,
Art not timorous, nor chary
 Of quaver, trill, and tone,
 Each perfect and thine own ;
But renewest, shrill or soft,
Thy greeting to the upper skies,
Chanting thy latest song aloft
With no tremor or disguise.
Thine is a music that defies
 The envious rival near ;
 Thou hast no fear
Of the day's vogue, the scornful critic's sneer.

Would, O wisest bard, that now
I could cheerily sing as thou !

Would I might chant the thoughts which on me
throng

For the very joy of song !

Here, on the written page,

I falter, yearning to impart

The vague and wandering murmur of my heart,

Haply a little to assuage

This human restlessness and pain,

And half forget my chain :

Thou, unconscious of thy cage,

Showerest music everywhere ;

Thou hast no care

But to pour out the largesse thou hast won

From the south-wind and the sun ;

There are no prison-bars

Betwixt thy tricky spirit and the stars.

When from its delicate clay

Thy little life shall pass away,

Thou wilt not meanly die,

Nor voiceless yield to silence and decay ;

But triumph still in art

And act thy minstrel-part,

Lifting a last, long pæan

To the unventured empyrean.

—So bid the world go by,

And they who list to thee aright,

Seeing thee fold thy wings and fall, shall say :

“ The Songster perished of his own delight ! ”

SHADOW-LAND.

“THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY.”

COULD we but know
The land that ends our dark, uncertain travel,
Where lie those happier hills and meadows low,—
Ah, if beyond the spirit's inmost cavel,
Aught of that country could we surely know,
Who would not go?

Might we but hear
The hovering angels' high imagined chorus,
Or catch, betimes, with wakeful eyes and clear,
One radiant vista of the realm before us,—
With one rapt moment given to see and hear,
Ah, who would fear?

Were we quite sure
To find the peerless friend who left us lonely,
Or there, by some celestial stream as pure,
To gaze in eyes that here were lovelit only,—
This weary mortal coil, were we quite sure,
Who would endure?

“DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW.”

WAKING, I have been nigh to Death,—
Have felt the chillness of his breath
Whiten my cheek and numb my heart,
And wondered why he stayed his dart,—
Yet quailed not, but could meet him so,
As any lesser friend or foe.

But sleeping, in the dreams of night,
 His phantom stifles me with fright !
 O God ! what frozen horrors fall
 Upon me with his visioned pall :
 The movelessness, the unknown dread,
 Fair life to pulseless silence wed !

And *is* the grave so darkly deep,
 So hopeless, as it seems in sleep ?
 Can our sweet selves the coffin hold
 So dumb within its crumbling mould ?
 And is the shroud so dank and drear
 A garb,—the noisome worm *so* near ?

Where then is Heaven's mercy fled,—
 To quite forget the voiceless dead ?

THE ASSAULT BY NIGHT.

ALL night we hear the rattling flaw,
 The casements shiver with each breath ;
 And still more near the foemen draw,
 The pioneers of Death,
 Their grisly chieftain comes :
 He steals upon us in the night ;
 Call up the guards ! light every light !
 Beat the alarum drums !

His tramp is at the outer door ;
 He bears against the shuddering walls ;
 Lo ! what a dismal frost and hoar
 Upon the window falls !

Outbar him while ye may !
Feed, feed the watch-fires everywhere,—
Even yet their cheery warmth will scare
This thing of night away.

Ye cannot ! something chokes the grate
And clogs the air within its flues,
And runners from the entrance-gate
Come chill with evil news :
The bars are broken ope !
Ha ! he has scaled the inner wall !
But fight him still, from hall to hall ;
While life remains, there's hope.

Too late ! the very frame is dust,
The locks and trammels fall apart ;
He reaches, scornful of their trust,
The portals of the heart.
Ay, take the citadel !
But where, grim Conqueror, is thy prey ?
In vain thou'lt search each secret way,
Its flight is hidden well.

We yield thee, for thy paltry spoils,
This shell, this ruin thou hast made ;
Its tenant has escaped thy toils,
Though they were darkly laid.
Even now, immortal, pure,
It gains a house not made with hands,
A refuge in serener lands,
A heritage secure.

THE TEST.

SEVEN women loved him. When the wrinkled
pall

Enwrapt him from their unfulfilled desire
(Death, pale, triumphant rival, conquering all,)

They came, for that last look, around his pyre.

One strewed white roses, on whose leaves were
hung

Her tears, like dew ; and in discreet attire

Warbled her tuneful sorrow. Next among

The group, a fair-haired virgin moved serenely,
Whose saintly heart no vain repinings wrung,

Reached the calm dust, and there, composed and
queenly,

Gazed, but the missal trembled in her hand :

That's with the past," she said, " nor may I meanly

Give way to tears !" and passed into the land.

The third hung feebly on the portals, moaning,
With whitened lips, and feet that stood in sand,

So weak they seemed,—and all her passion owning.

The fourth, a ripe, luxurious maiden, came,
Half for such homage to the dead atoning

By smiles on one who fanned a later flame

In her slight soul, her fickle steps attended.

The fifth and sixth were sisters ; at the same

Wild moment both above the image bended,
And with immortal hatred each on each
Glared, and therewith her exultation blended,

To know the dead had 'scaped the other's reach !
Meanwhile, through all the words of anguish
spoken,
One lowly form had given no sound of speech,

Through all the signs of woe, no sign nor token ;
But when they came to bear him to his rest,
They found her beauty paled, —her heart was
broken :

And in the Silent Land his shade confest
That she, of all the seven, loved him best.

THE SAD BRIDAL.

WHAT would you do, my dear one said,—
What would you do, if I were dead ?
If Death should mumble, as he list,
These red lips which now you kist ?
What would my love do, were I wed
To that ghastly groom instead ;
If o'er me, in the chancel, Death
Should cast his amaranthine wreath,—
Before my eyes, with fingers pale,
Draw down the mouldy bridal veil ?
—Ah no ! no ! it cannot be !
Death would spare their light, and flee,
And leave my love to Life and me !

SPOKEN AT SEA.

THE LOG-BOOK OF THE STEAMSHIP VIRGINIA.

TWELVE hundred miles and more
From the stormy English shore,
All aright, the seventh night,
On her course our vessel bore.
Her lantern shone ahead,
And the green lamp and the red
To starboard and to larboard
Shot their light.

Close on the midnight call
What a mist began to fall,
And to hide the ocean wide,
And to wrap us in a pall !
Beneath its folds we past :
Hidden were shroud and mast,
And faces, in near places
Side by side.

Sudden there also fell
A summons like a knell :
Every ear the words could hear,—
Whence spoken, who could tell ?
“ What ship is this ? where bound ? ”
Gods, what a dismal sound !
A stranger, and in danger,
Sailing near.

“The Virginia, on her route
From the Mersey, seven days out ;
Fore and aft, our trusty craft
Carries a thousand souls, about.”
“All these souls may travel still,
Westward bound, if so they will ;
Bodies rather, I would gather !”
Loud he laughed.

“Who is’t that hails so rude,
And for what this idle mood ?
Words like these, on midnight seas,
Bode no friend nor fortune good !”
“Care not to know my name,
But whence I lastly came,
At leisure, for my pleasure,
Ask the breeze.

“To the people of your port
Bear a message of this sort :
Say, I haste unto the West,
A sharer of their sport.
Let them sweep the houses clean :
Their fathers did, I ween,
When hearing of my nearing
As a guest !

“As by Halifax ye sail
And the steamship England hail,
Of me, then, bespeak her men ;
She took my latest mail,—
’Twas somewhere near this spot :
Doubtless they’ve not forgot.
Remind them (if you find them !)
Once again.

“ Yet that you all may know
Who is't that hailed you so,
 (Slow he saith, and under breath,)
I leave my sign below !”
Then from our crowded hold
A dreadful cry uprolled,
 Unbroken, and the token,—
 It was Death.

THE COMEDIAN'S LAST NIGHT.

NOT yet ! No, no,—you would not quote
 That meanest of the critic's gags ?
'Twas surely not of me they wrote
 Those words, *too late the veteran lags* :
'Tis not so very late with me ;
 I'm not so old as that, you know,
Though work and trouble—as you see—
 (Not years) have brought me somewhat low.
I failed, you say ? No, no, not yet !
 Or, if I did,—with such a past,
Where is the man would have me quit
 Without one triumph at the last ?

But one night more,—a little thing
 To you,—I swear 'tis all I ask !
Once more to make the wide house ring,—
 To tread the boards, to wear the mask,
To move the coldest as of yore,
 To make them laugh, to make them cry,
To be—to be myself once more,
 And then, if must be, let me die !

The prompter's bell ! I'm here, you see :
 By Heaven, friends, you'll break my heart !
Nat Gosling's called : let be, let be,—
 None but myself shall act the part !

Yes, thank you, boy, I'll take your chair
 One moment, while I catch my breath.
 D'ye hear the noise they're making there?
 'Twould warm a player's heart in death.
 How say you now ? Whate'er they write,
 We've put that bitter gibè to shame ;
 I knew, I knew there burned to-night
 Within my soul the olden flame !
 Stand off a bit : that final round,—
 I'd hear it ere it dies away
 The last, last time !—there's no more sound :
 So end the player and the play.

The house is cleared. My senses swim ;
 I shall be better, though, anon,—
 One stumbles when the lights are dim,—
 'Tis growing late : we must be gone.
 Well, braver luck than mine, old friends !
 A little work and fame are ours
 While Heaven health and fortune lends,
 And then—the coffin and the flowers !
 These scattered garments ? let them lie :
 Some fresher actor (I'm not vain)
 Will dress anew the part ;—but I—
I shall not put them on again.

SHIELD AND FORT.

FROM "ALICE OF MONMOUTH."

I.

WEAR no armour, timid heart ;
Fear no keen misfortune's dart,
Want, nor scorn, nor secret blow
Dealt thee by thy mortal foe.

2.

Let the Fates their weapons wield,
For a wondrous woven shield
Shall be given thee, erelong.
Mesh of gold were not so strong ;
Not so soft were silken shred ;
Not so fine the spider's thread
Barring the enchanted door
In that tale of ancient lore,
Guarding, silently and well,
All within the mystic cell.
Such a shield, where'er thou art,
Shall be thine, O wounded heart !
From the ills that compass thee
Thou behind it shalt be free ;
Envy, slander, malice, all
Shall withdraw them from thy—Pall.

3.

Build no house with patient care,
Fair to view, and strong as fair ;
Walled with noble deeds' renown ;
Shining over field and town,
Seen from land and sea afar,
Proud in peace, secure in war.
For the moments never sleep,
Building thee a castle-keep,—
Proof alike 'gainst heat and cold,
Earthly sorrows manifold,
Sickness, failure of thine ends,
And the falling off of friends.
Treason, want, dishonour, wrong,
None of these shall harm thee long.
Every day a beam is made ;
Hour by hour a stone is laid.
Back the cruellest shall fall
From the warder at the wall ;
Foemen shall not dare to tread
On the ramparts o'er thy head ;
Dark, triumphant flags shall wave
From the fastness of thy—Grave.

THE DISCOVERER.

I HAVE a little kinsman
Whose earthly summers are but three,
And yet a voyager is he
Greater than Drake or Frobisher,
Than all their peers together !

He is a brave discoverer,
And, far beyond the tether
Of them who seek the frozen Pole,
Has sailed where the noiseless surges roll.
Ay, he has travelled whither
A winged pilot steered his bark
Through the portals of the dark,
Past hoary Mimir's well and tree,
Across the unknown sea.

Suddenly, in his fair young hour,
Came one who bore a flower,
And laid it in his dimpled hand
With this command :

"Henceforth thou art a rover !
Thou must make a voyage far,
Sail beneath the evening star,
And a wondrous land discover."
—With his sweet smile innocent .
Our little kinsman went.

Since that time no word
From the absent has been heard.
Who can tell
How he fares, or answer well
What the little one has found
Since he left us, outward bound ?
Would that he might return !
Then should we learn
From the pricking of his chart
How the skyey roadways part.
Hush ! does not the baby this way bring,
To lay beside this severed curl,
Some starry offering
Of chrysolite or pearl ?

THE DISCOVERER.

Ah, no ! not so !
We may follow on his track,
But he comes not back.
And yet I dare aver
He is a brave discoverer
Of climes his elders do not know.
He has more learning than appears
On the scroll of twice three thousand years,
More than in the groves is taught,
Or from furthest Indies brought ;
He knows, perchance, how spirits fare,—
What shapes the angels wear,
What is their guise and speech
In those lands beyond our reach,—
And his eyes behold
Things that shall never, never be to mortal hearers
told.



IN WAR-TIME.

IN WAR-TIME.

FROM "ALICE OF MONMOUTH."

I.

IN the great wall-tent at the head of the square,
The Colonel hangs his sword, and there
Huge logs burn high in front at the close of the
day ;
And the captains gather ere the long tattoo,
While the banded buglers play ;
Then come the tales of home and the troopers'
song.
Clear over the distant outposts float the notes,
And the lone vidette to catch them listens long ;
And the officer of the guard, upon his round,
Pauses, to hear the sound
Of the chiming chorus poured from a score of
throats :

CAVALRY SONG.

Our good steeds snuff the evening air,
Our pulses with their purpose tingle ;
The foeman's fires are twinkling there ;
He leaps to hear our sabres jingle !

HALT !

Each carbine sends its whizzing ball :
Now, cling ! clang ! forward all,
Into the fight !

Dash on beneath the smoking dome,
Through level lightnings gallop nearer !
One look to Heaven ! No thoughts of home :
The guidons that we bear are dearer.

CHARGE !

Cling ! clang ! forward all !
Heaven help those whose horses fall !
Cut left and right !

They flee before our fierce attack !
They fall, they spread in broken surges !
Now, comrades, bear our wounded back,
And leave the foeman to his dirges.

WHEEL !

The bugles sound the swift recall :
Cling ! clang ! backward all !
Home, and good night !

II.

THE SERGEANT'S TALE.

I.

THUS,—when ended the morning tramp,
And the regiment came back to camp,
And the Colonel, breathing hard with pain,
Was carried within the lines again,—
Thus a Colour-Sergeant told
The story of that skirmish bold :

2.

“ ’Twas an hour past midnight, twelve hours ago,—
We were all asleep, you know,
Save the officer on his rounds,
And the guard-relief,—when sounds

The signal-gun ! once—twice—
Thrice ! and then, in a trice,
The long assembly-call rang sharp and clear,
Till ‘ Boots and Saddles ’ made us scamper like mice.
No time to waste
In asking whether a fight was near ;
Over the horses went their traps in haste ;
Not ten minutes had past
Ere we stood in marching gear,
And the call of the roll was followed by orders fast :
‘ Prepare to mount ! ’
‘ Mount ! ’—and the company ranks were made ;
Then in each rank, by fours, we took the count,
And the head of the column wheeled for the long
parade.

3.

“ There, on the beaten ground,
The regiment formed from right to left ;
Our Colonel, straight in his saddle, looked around,
Reining the stallion in, that felt the heft
Of his rider, and stamped his foot, and wanted to
dance.
At last the order came :
‘ By twos : forward, march ! ’—and the same
From each officer in advance ;
And, as the rear-guard left the spot,
We broke into the even trot.

4.

“ ‘ Trot, march ! ’—two by two,
In the dust and in the dew,
Roads and open meadows through.

Steadily we kept the tune
Underneath the stars and moon.
None, except the Colonel, knew
What our orders were to do ;
Whether on a forage-raid
We were tramping, boot and blade,
Or a close reconnoissance
Ere the army should advance ;
One thing certain, we were bound
Straight for Stuart's camping-ground.
Plunging into forest-shade,
Well we knew each glen and glade !
Sweet they smelled, the pine and oak,
And of home my comrade spoke.
Tramp, tramp, out again,
Sheer across the ragged plain,
Where the moonbeams glaze our steel
And the fresher air we feel.
Thus a triple league, and more,
Till behind us spreads the gray,
Pallid light of breaking day,
And on cloudy hills, before,
Dying camp-fires smoke away.
Hard by yonder clump of pines
We should touch the Southern lines :
'Walk, march !' and, softly now,
Gain yon hillock's westward brow.

5.

“‘Halt !’ and ‘Right into line !’—There on the ridge
In battle-order we let the horses breathe ;
The Colonel raised his glass and scanned the
bridge,
The tents on the bank beyond, the stream beneath.

Just then the sun first broke from the redder east,
And their pickets saw five hundred of us, at least,
Stretched like a dark stockade against the sky ;
We heard their long-roll clamour loud and nigh :
In half a minute a rumbling battery whirled
To a mound in front, unlimbering with a will,
And a twelve-pound solid shot came right along,
Singing a devilish morning-song,
And touched my comrade's leg, and the poor boy
 curled
And dropt to the turf, holding his bridle still.
Well, we moved out of range,—were wheeling
 round,
I think, for the Colonel had taken his look at their
 ground,
(Thus he was ordered, it seems, and nothing more :
Hardly worth coming at midnight for !)
When, over the bridge, a troop of the enemy's
 horse
Dashed out upon our course,
Giving us hope of a tussle to warm our blood.
Then we cheered, to a man, that our early call
Hadn't been sounded for nothing, after all ;
And halting, to wait their movements, the column
 stood.

6.

“ Then into squadrons we saw their ranks enlarge,
And slow and steady they moved to the charge,
Shaking the ground as they came in carbine-range.
‘ Front into line ! March ! Halt ! Front ! ’
Our Colonel cried ; and in squadrons, to meet the
 brunt,

We too from the walk to the trot our paces change :
'Gallop, march !'—and, hot for the fray,
Pistols and sabres drawn, we canter away.

7.

"Twenty rods over the slippery clover
We galloped as gayly as lady and lover ;
Held the reins lightly, our good weapons tightly,
Five solid squadrons all shining and sightly ;
Not too fast, half the strength of our brave steeds
to wasten,
Not too slow, for the warmth of their fire made us
hasten,
As it came with a rattle and opened the battle,
Tumbling from saddles ten fellows of mettle.
So the distance grew shorter, their sabres shone
broader ;
Then the bugle's wild blare and the Colonel's loud
order,—
'CHARGE !' and we sprang, while the far echo
rang,
And their bullets, like bees, in our ears fiercely
sang.
Forward we strode to pay what we owed,
Right at the head of their column we rode ;
Together we dashed, and the air reeled and flashed ;
Stirrups, sabres, and scabbards all shattered and
crashed
As we cut in and out, right and left, all about,
Hand to hand, blow for blow, shot for shot, shout
for shout,
Till the earth seemed to boil with the heat of our
toil,
But in less than five minutes we felt them recoil,

Heard their shrill rally sound, and, like hares from
the hound,

Each ran for himself : one and all fled the ground !
Then we goaded them up to their guns, where they
cowered,

And the breeze cleared the field where the battle-
cloud lowered.

Threescore of them lay, to teach them the way
Van Ghelt and his rangers their compliments pay.

But a plenty, I swear, of our saddles were bare ;
Friend and foe, horse and rider, lay sprawled every-
where :

'Twas hard hitting, you see, Sir, that gained us the
day !

8.

“ Yes, they too had their say before they fled,
And the loss of our Colonel is worse than all the
rest.

One of their captains aimed at him, as he led
The foremost charge—I shot the rascal dead,
But the Colonel fell, with a bullet through his
breast.

We lifted him from the mire, when the field was
won,

And their captured colours shaded him from the sun
In the farmer's wagon we took for his homeward
ride ;

But he never said a word, nor opened his eyes,
Till we reached the camp. In yon hospital tent he
lies,

And his poor young wife will come to watch by his
side.

The surgeon hasn't found the bullet, as yet,
But he says it's a mortal wound. Where will you
get
Another such man to lead us, if he dies?"

III.

A BATTLE-FIELD.

I.

FRIENDS and foes,—who could discover which,
As they marked the zigzag, outer ditch,
Or lay so cold and still in the bush,
Fallen and trampled down in the last wild rush?
Then the shattered forest-trees; the clearing there
Where a battery stood; dead horses, pawing the
air
With horrible upright hoofs; a mangled mass
Of wounded and stifled men in the low morass;
And the long trench dug in haste for a burial-pit,
Whose yawning length and breadth all comers fit.

2.

And over the dreadful precinct, like the lights
That flit through graveyard walks in dismal nights,
Men with lanterns were groping among the dead,
Holding the flame to every hueless face,
And bearing those whose life had not wholly fled
On stretchers, that looked like biers, from the
ghastly place.

3.

The air above seemed heavy with errant souls,
Dense with ghosts from those gory forms arisen,—
Each rudely driven from its prison,
'Mid the harsh jar of rattling musket-rolls,
And quivering throes, and unexpected force ;
In helpless waves adrift confusedly,
Freighting the sombre haze without resource.
Through all there trickled, from the pitying sky,
An infinite mist of tears upon the ground,
Muffling the groans of anguish with its sound.

4.

On the borders of such a land, on the bounds of
Death,
The stranger, shuddering, moved as one who saith :
“ God ! what a doleful clime, a drear domain ! ”
And onward, struggling with his pain,
Traversed the endless camp-fires, spark by spark,
Past sentinels that challenged from the dark,
Guided through camp and camp to one long tent
Whose ridge a flying bolt from the field had rent,
Letting the midnight mist, the battle din,
Fall on the hundred forms that writhed within.

THE QUEEN'S SECRET.

THE QUEEN'S SECRET.

FROM "THE BLAMELESS PRINCE."

SO died the blameless Prince. The spacious land
Was smitten in his death, and such a wail
Arose, as when the midnight angel's hand
Was laid on Egypt. Gossips ceased their tale,
Or whispered of his goodness, and were mute ;
No sound was heard of viol and of lute ;

The streets were hung with black ; the artisan
Forsook his forge ; the artist dropped his brush ;
The tradesmen closed their windows. Man with
man

Struck hands together in the first deep hush
Of grief ; or, where the dead Prince lay in state,
Spoke of his life, so blameless, pure, and great.

But when, within the dark cathedral vault,
They joined his ashes to the dust of kings,
No royal pomp was shown ; for Death made halt
Above the palace yet, on dusky wings,
Waiting to gain the Queen, who still was prone
Along the couch where haply she had thrown,

At knowledge of the end, her stricken frame.

With visage pale as in a mortal swoond
She stayed, nor slept, nor wept, till, weeping, came
The crown-prince and besought her to look
round

And speak unto her children. Then she said :
" Hereto no grief has fallen on our head ;

“Now all our earthly portion in one mass
Is loosed against us with this single stroke !
Yet we are Queen, and still must live,—alas !—
As he would have us.” Even as she spoke
She wept, and mended thence, yet bore the face
Of one whose fate delays but for a space.

Thenceforth she worked and waited till the call
Of Heaven should close the labour and the pause.
Months, seasons passed, yet evermore a pall
Hung round the court. The sorrow and the cause
Were always with her ; after things were tame
Beside the shadow of his deeds and fame.

Her palaces and parks seemed desolate ;
No joy was left in sky or street or field ;
No age, she thought, would see the Prince's mate :
What matchless hand his knightly sword could
wield ?

The world has lost, this royal widow said,
Its one bright jewel when the Prince was dead.

So that his fame might be enduring there
For many a reign, and sacred through the land,
She gathered bronze and lazuli, and rare
Swart marbles, while her cunning artists planned
A stately cenotaph,—and bade them place
Above its front the Prince's form and face,

Sculptured, as if in life. But the pale Queen,
Watching the work herself, would somewhat lure
Her heart from plaining ; till, behind a screen,
The tomb was finished, glorious and pure,
Even like the Prince : and they proclaimed a day
When the Queen's hand should draw its veil away.

It chanced, the noon before, she bade them fetch
Her equipage, and with her children rode
Beyond the city walls, across a stretch
Of the green open country, where abode
Her subjects, happy in the field and grange,
And with their griefs, that took a meaner range,

Content. But as her joyless vision dwelt
On beauty that so failed her wound to heal,
She marked the Abbey's ancient pile, and felt
A longing at its chapel-shrine to kneel,
To pray, and think awhile on Heaven,—her one
Sole passion, now the Prince had thither gone.

She reached the gate, and through the vestibule
The nuns, with reverence for the royal sorrow,
Led to the shrine, and left her there to school
Her heart for that sad pageant of the morrow.
Oh, what deep sighs, what piteous tearful prayers,
What golden grief-blanchèd hair strewn unawares !

Anon her coming through the place was sped,
And when from that lone ecstasy she rose,
The saintly Abbess held her steps, and said :
“God rests those, daughter, who in others' woes
Forget their own ! In yonder corridor
A sister-sufferer lies, and will no more

“Pass through her door to catch the morning's
breath,—

A worldling once, the chamberlain's young wife,
But now a pious novice, meet for death ;

She prays to see your face once more in life.”
“She, too, is widowed,” thought the Queen. Aloud
She answered, “I will visit her,” and bowed

Her head, and, following, reached the room where
lay

One that had wronged her so ; and shrank to
see

That beauteous pallid face, so pined away,

And the starved lips that murmured painfully,

"I have a secret none but she may hear."

At the Queen's sign, they two were left anear.

With that the dying rushed upon her speech,

As one condemned, who gulps the poisoned wine

Nor pauses, lest to see it stand at reach

Were crueller still. "Madam, I sought a sign,"

She cried, "to know if God would have me make

Confession, and to you ! now let me take

"This meeting as the sign, and speak, and die !"

"Child," said the Queen, "your years are yet too
few.

See how I live,—and yet what sorrows lie

About my heart."—"I know,—the world spake
true !

You too have loved him ; ay, he seems to stand

Between us ! Queen, you had the Prince's hand,

"But not his love !" Across the good Queen's
brow

A flame of anger reddened, as when one
Meets unprepared a swift and ruthless blow,

But instant paled to pity, as she thought,

"She wanders : 'tis the fever at her brain !"

And looked her thought. The other cried again :

"Yes ! I am ill of body and soul indeed,

Yet this was as I say. Oh, not for me

Pity, from you who wear the widow's weed,
Unknowing !"—"Woman, whose could that love
be,
If not all mine?" The other, with a moan,
Rose in her bed ; the pillow, backward thrown,

Was darkened with the torrent of her hair.
" 'Twas hers," she wailed—" 'twas hers who loved
him best."

Then tore apart her night-robe, and laid bare
Her flesh, and lo ! against her poor white breast
Close round her gloomed a shift of blackest serge,
Fearful, concealed !—" I might not sing his dirge,"

She said, " nor moan aloud and bring him shame,
Nor haunt his tomb and cling about the grate,
But this I fashioned when the tidings came
That he was dead and I must expiate,
Being left, our double sin !" —In the Queen's heart,
The tiger—that is prisoned at life's start

In mortals, though perchance it never wakes
From its mute sleep—began to rouse and crawl.
Her lips paled, and about them angry flakes
Of wrath and loathing stood. "What, now, is
all
This wicked drivell?" she cried ; "how dare they
bring
The Queen to listen to so foul a thing?"

"Queen ! I speak truth,—the truth, I say ! He
fed
Upon these lips,—this hair he loved to praise !

I held within these arms his bright fair head
 Pressed close, ah, close !—Our lifetimes were the
 days

We met,—the rest a void ! ”—“ Thou spectral Sin,
Be silent ! or, if such a thing hath been,—

“ If this be not thy frenzy,—quick, the proof,
 Before I score the lie thy lips amid ! ”

She spoke so dread the other crouched aloof,
 Panting, but with gaunt hands somewhere undid
A knot within her hair, and thence she took
The signet-ring and passed it. The Queen's look

Fell on it, and that moment the strong stay,
 Which held her from the instinct of her wrong,
Broke, and therewith the whole device gave way,
 The grand ideal she had watched so long :
As if a tower should fall, and on the plain
Only a scathed and broken pile remain.

But in its stead she would not measure yet
 The counter-chance, nor deem this sole attainment
Made the Prince less than one in whom 'twas set
 To prove him man. “ I held him as a saint,”
She thought, “ no other :—of all men alone
My blameless one ! Too high my faith had flown :

“ So be it ! ” With a sudden bitter scorn
 She said : “ You were his plaything, then ! the
 food

Wherewith he dulled what appetite is born,
 Of the gross kind, in men. His nobler mood
You knew not ! How shall I,—the fountain life
Of yonder children,—his embosomed wife

“Through all these years,—shall I, his Queen, for
this

Sin-smitten harlot's gage of an hour's shame,
Misdoubt him?”—“Yes, I was his harlot,—yes,
God help me ! and had worn the loathly name
Before the world, to have him in that guise !”

“Thou strumpet ! wilt thou have me of his prize

“Rob Satan?” cried the Queen, and one step
moved.

“Queen, if you loved him, save me from your
bane,

As something that was dear to him you loved !”

Then from beneath her serge she took the
chain

Which, long ago in that lone wood, the Prince
Hung round her,—she had never loosed it since,—

And gave therewith the face which, in its years

Of youthful, sunniest grace, a limner drew ;

And unsigned letters, darkened with her tears,

Writ in the hand that hapless sovereign knew

Too well ;—then told the whole, strange, secret
tale,

As if with Heaven that penance could avail,

Or with the Queen, who heard as idols list

The mad priest's cry, nor changed her place nor
moaned,

But, clutching those mute tokens of each tryst,

Hid them about her. But the other groaned :

“The picture,—let me see it ere I die,—

Then take them all ! once, only !”—At that cry

The Queen strode forward with an awful stride,
And seized the dying one, and bore her down,
And rose her height, and said, "Thou shouldst
have died

Ere telling this, nor I have worn a crown
To hear it told. I am of God accurst !
Of all his hated, may he smite thee first !"

With that wild speech she fled, nor looked behind,
Hasting to get her from that fearful room,
Past the meek nuns in wait. These did not find
The sick one's eyes—yet staring through the
gloom,

While her hands fumbled at her heart, and Death
Made her limbs quake, and combated her breath—

More dreadful than the Queen's look, as she thence
Made through the court, and reached her own
array

She knew not how, and clamoured, "Bear me
hence !"

And, even as her chariot moved away,
High o'er the Abbey heard the minster toll
Its doleful bell, as for a passing soul.

Though 'midst her guardsmen, as they speeded back,
The wont of royalty maintained her still,
Where grief had been were ruin now and rack !

The firm earth reeled about, nor could her will
Make it seem stable, while her soul went through
Her wedded years in desperate review.

The air seemed full of lies ; the realm, unsound ;
Her courtiers, knaves ; her maidens, good and
fair,

Most shameless bawds ; her children clung around
Like asps, to sting her ; from the kingdom's heir,
Shuddering, she turned her face,—his features took
A shining horror from his father's look.

Along her city streets the thrifty crowd,
As the Queen passed, their loving reverence
made.

"'Tis false ! they love me not !" she cried aloud ;
So flung her from her chariot, and forbade
All words, but waved her ladies back, and gained
Her inmost room, and by herself remained.

"We have been alone these years, and knew it not,"
She said ; "now let us on the knowledge thrive !"
So closed the doors, and all things else forgot
Than her own misery. "I cannot live
And bear this death," she said, "nor die, the more
To meet him,—and that woman gone before !"

Thus with herself she writhed, while midnight
gloomed,

As lone as any outcast of us all ;
And once, without a purpose, as the doomed
Stare round and count the shadows on the wall,
Unclasped a poet's book which near her lay,
And turned its pages in that witless way,

And read the song, some wise, sad man had made,
With bitter frost about his doubting heart.

"What is this life," it plained, "what masquerade
Of which ye all are witnesses and part ?
'Tis but a foolish, smiling face to wear
Above your mortal sorrow, chill despair ;

“To mock your comrades and yourselves with
mirth

That feeds the care ye cannot drive away ;
To vaunt of health, yet hide beneath the girth
Impuissance, fell sickness, slow decay ;
To cloak defeat, and with the rich, the great,
Applaud their fairer fortunes as their mate ;

“To brave the sudden woe, the secret loss,
Though but to-morrow brings the open shame ;
To pay the tribute of your caste, and toss
Your last to him that's richer save in name ;
To judge your peers, and give the doleful meed
To crime that's white beside your hidden deed ;

“To whisper love, where of true love is none,—
Desire, where lust is dead ; to live unchaste,
And wear the priestly cincture ;—last, to own,
When the morn's dream is gone and noontide
waste,
Some fate still kept ye from your purpose sweet,
Down strange, circuitous paths it drew your feet !”

Thus far she read, and, “Let me read no more,”
She clamoured, “since the scales have left mine
eyes

And freed the dreadful gift I lacked before !

We are but puppets, in whatever guise
They clothe us, to whatever tune we move ;
Albeit we prate of duty, dream of love.

“Let me, too, play the common part, and wean
My life from hope, and look beneath the mask
To read the masker ! I, who was a Queen,
And like a hireling thought to 'scape my task !

For some few seasons left this heart is schooled :
Yet,—had it been a little longer fooled,—

“ O God ! ” And from her seat she bowed her
down.

The gentle sovereign of that spacious land
Lay prone beneath the bauble of her crown,
Nor heard all night her whispering ladies stand
Outside the portal. Greatly, in the morn,
They marvelled at her visage wan and worn.

TRANSLATIONS.

JEAN PROUVAIRE'S SONG AT THE BARRICADE.

VICTOR HUGO.

“While the men were making cartridges and the women lint ; while a large frying-pan, full of melted pewter and lead, destined for the bullet-mould, was smoking over a burning furnace ; while the videttes were watching the barricades with arms in their hands ; while Enjolras, whom nothing could distract, was watching the videttes, —Combeferre, Courfeyrac, Jean Prouvaire, Feuilly, Bossuet, Joly, Bahorel, a few others besides, sought each other and got together, as in the most peaceful days of their student-chats, and in a corner of this wine-shop changed into a casemate, within two steps of the redoubt which they had thrown up, their carbines, primed and loaded, resting on the backs of their chairs, these gallant young men, so near their last hour, began to sing love-rhymes. . . . The hour, the place, these memories of youth recalled, the few stars which began to shine in the sky, the funereal repose of these deserted streets, the imminence of the inexorable event, gave a pathetic charm to these rhymes, murmured in a low tone in the twilight by Jean Prouvaire, who, as we have said, was a sweet poet.”—*Les Misérables : Saint Denis*, Book XII, Chapter VI.

DO you remember our charming times,
When we were both at the age which knows,
Of all the pleasures of Paris, none
Like making love in one's Sunday clo'es ;
When all your birthdays, added to mine,
A total of forty would not bring,
And when, in our humble and cosy roost,
All, even the Winter, to us was Spring ?

Rare days ! then prudish Manuel stalked,
Paris feasted each saint's-day in ;
Foy thundered away ; and—ah, your waist
Pricked me well with a truant pin !

Every one ogled you. At Prado's,
Where you and your briefless barrister dined,
You were so fair that the roses, I thought,
Turned to look at you from behind.

They seemed to whisper : “ How handsome she is !
What wavy tresses ! what sweet perfume !
Under her mantle she hides her wings ;
Her flower of a bonnet is just in bloom ! ”

I roamed with you, pressing your dainty arm,
And the passers thought that Love, in play,
Had mated, in unison so sweet,
The gallant April with gentle May.

We lived so cosily, all by ourselves,
On love,—that choice forbidden fruit,—
And never a word my lips could speak
But your heart already had followed suit.

The Sorbonne was that bucolic place
Where night till day my passion throve :
'Tis thus that an ardent youngster makes
The Student's Quarter a Realm of Love.

O Place Maubert ! O Place Dauphine !
Sky-parlour reaching heavenward far,
In whose depths, when you drew your stocking on,
I saw a twinkling morning-star.

Hard-learned Plato I've long forgot :
Neither Malebranche nor Lamennais
Could teach me such faith in Providence
As the flower which in your bosom lay.

You were my servant and I your slave :
O golden attic ! O joy, to lace
Your corset ; to watch you showing, at morn,
The ancient mirror your youthful face !

Ah ! who indeed could ever forget
That sky and dawn commingling still ;
That ribbony, flowery, gauzy glory,
And Love's sweet nonsense talked at will ?

Our garden a pot of tulips was ;
Your petticoat curtained the window-pane :
I took the earthen bowl of my pipe
And gave you a cup of porcelain.

What huge disasters to make us fun !
Your muff afire ; your tippet lost ;
And that cherished portrait of Shakespeare, sold,
One hungry evening, at half its cost.

I was a beggar and you were kind :
A kiss from your fair round arms I'd steal,
While the folio Dante we gaily spread
With a hundred chestnuts, our frugal meal.

And oh ! when first my favoured mouth
A kiss to your burning lips had given,
You were dishevelled and all aglow ;
I, pale with rapture, believed in Heaven.

Do you remember our countless joys,
Those neckerchiefs rumpled every day ?
Alas, what sighs from our boding hearts
The infinite skies have borne away !

HYLAS.

FROM THEOKRITOS.

[THE THIRTEENTH IDYLL.*]

NOT for ourselves alone the God who fathered
that stripling
Erôs, begat him, Nikias, as we have flattered us :
neither
Unto ourselves the first have beauties seemed to be
beauties,—
Not unto us, who are mortal and do not foresee the
morrow ;
But that heart of brass, Amphitryon's son, who
awaited
Stoutly the ruthless lion, he too was fond of a youth
once,—
Graceful Hylas, the lad with the curling locks,—
and he taught him
All fair things, as a father would teach the child of
his bosom,
All which himself had learned, and great and
renowned in song grown ;
Nor was he ever at all apart from him, neither at
midday,

* In disputed passages of the text the translator has endeavoured to select the most poetic reading.

Nor when the white-horsed car of Eos ran up to
Zeusward,—
Nor when the twittering chickens looked to their
nest, and the mother
Over her smoky perch at eve had fluttered her
pinions ;—
So might the lad be featly trained to his heart's own
liking,
And, with himself for guide, grow up a genuine hero.
Now when it chanced that Jason, the son of Æson,
went sailing
After the Golden Fleece, and with him followed
the nobles,—
Picked from all the towns and ripe for that service,
—among them
Also to rich Iôlkos came the labouring hero,
He that was son of Alkmene,—the heroine of
Mideia ;
And by his side went Hylas down to the bulwarked
Argo,
Which good ship the clashing Kyanean rocks in no
wise
Touched, but clove as an eagle,—and so ran into
deep Phasis,—
Clove through a mighty surge, whence low reefs
juttet in those days.
So at the time when the Pleiads rise,—and out-of-
way places
Pasture the youngling lamb, and Spring has turned,
—the immortal
Flower of heroes began of their voyage then to be
mindful,
And, having sat them down again in the hollow
Argo,

Came to the Hellespont, a south wind blowing, the
third day,
And within the Propontis their anchorage made,—
where oxen
Broaden Kyanean furrows afield, and brighten the
ploughshare.
There stepping out on the beach they got the meal
of the evening,
Two by two ; and many were strewing a couch for
them all, since
Close at hand lay a meadow,—to furnish sedge for
the bedding ;
Thence sharp flowering-rush and low galingale they
cut them.
And with a brazen ewer the fair-haired Hylas was
seeking
Water, for Herakles' supper and sturdy Telamon's
also,—
Comrades twain, that ever were used to eat at one
table.
Erelong, too, he spied a spring in a low-lying
hollow ;
Rushes were thick around it, and dark-blue celan-
dine grew there,
Maiden-hair pale and green amongst the flourishing
parsley,
Ay, and the witch-grass tangling wild through
watery places.
Now the Nymphs were starting a dance in the
midst of the fountain,
Sleepless Nymphs, divine, to the country people a
terror,—
Malis, Euníka, and one with her look of the Spring,
Nycheia.

Soothly, the lad was holding the huge jar over the
water,

Dipping in haste, when one and all grew fast to his
hand there.

Love wound close around the gentle hearts of the
bevy,

Love for the Argive boy : and headlong into the
dark pool

Fell he, as when a fiery star has fallen from
heaven

Headlong into the sea, and a sailor cries to his
shipmates :

“ Loosen the tackle, lads !—Oh, here comes a wind
for sailing ! ”

As for the Nymphs, they held on their knees the
sorrowful stripling,

And with their kindly words were fain to comfort
his spirit.

But Amphitryon's son, alarmed for the youth,
bestirred him,

Taking Scythian-wise his bended bow and its
arrows,

Also the club, which his right hand ever to hold
was accustomed.

Thrice, ay, thrice, he shouted HYLAS ! loud as his
deep throat

Could, while thrice the lad heard underneath, and
a thin voice

Came from the wave, and oh, so near he was, yet
so distant !

And as a thick-maned lion that hears a whimpering
fawn cry

Far away,—some lion that munches flesh on the
mountains,—

Speeds from his lair to a meal which surely waits
for his coming,
So, through untrodden brambles, Herakles, craving
the dear youth,
Sped in tremor and scoured great reaches this way
and that way.
Reckless are they who love ! what ills he suffered
while ranging
Cliffs and thickets ! and light, beside this, seemed
the guest of Jason.
Meanwhile the ship lay still, with her tackle
hoisted above her,
And,—of those present,—the youth were clearing
the sails at midnight,
Waiting for Herakles : he, wherever his feet might
lead him
Wild went on, for a cruel god was tearing his
heart-strings.
Fairest Hylas is numbered thus with the Happy
Immortals :
Nathless the heroes were scoffing at Herakles as a
deserter,
Since he had fled from the ship of the thirty
benches, from Argo.
Onward he trudged afoot to Kolchis and welcome-
less Phasis.

THE DEATH OF AGAMEMNON.

FROM HOMER.

[*Odyssey*, XI., 385-456.]

ODYSSEUS IN HADES.

AFTERWARD, soon as the chaste Persephone
hither and thither
Now had scattered afar the slender shades of the
women,
Came the sorrowing ghost of Agamemnon Atreides ;
Round whom thronged, besides, the souls of the
others who also
Died, and met their fate, with him in the house of
Aigisthos.
He, then, after he drank of the dark blood, instantly
knew me,—
Ay, and he wailed aloud, and plenteous tears was
shedding,
Toward me reaching hands and eagerly longing to
touch me ;
But he was shorn of strength, nor longer came at
his bidding
That great force which once abode in his pliant
members.
Seeing him thus, I wept, and my heart was laden
with pity,
And, uplifting my voice, in wingèd words I ad-
dressed him :

“ King of men, Agamemnon, thou glorious son of
Atreus,
Say, in what wise did the doom of prostrate death
overcome thee?
Was it within thy ships thou wast subdued by
Poseidon
Rousing the dreadful blast of winds too hard to be
mastered,
Or on the firm-set land did banded foemen destroy
thee
Cutting their oxen off, and their flocks so fair, or, it
may be,
While in a town’s defence, or in that of women,
contending?”

Thus I spake, and he, replying, said to me
straightway :

“ Nobly-born and wise Odysseus, son of Laertes,
Neither within my ships was I subdued by Poseidon
Rousing the dreadful blast of winds too hard to be
mastered,
Nor on the firm-set land did banded foemen destroy
me,—
Nay, but death and my doom were well contrived
by Aigisthos,
Who, with my cursèd wife, at his own house bidding
me welcome,
Fed me, and slew me, as one might slay an ox at
the manger !
So, by a death most wretched, I died ; and all my
companions
Round me were slain off-hand, like white-toothed
swine that are slaughtered
Thus, when some lordly man, abounding in power
and riches,

Orders a wedding-feast, or a frolic, or mighty
carousal.

Thou indeed hast witnessed the slaughter of num-
berless heroes

Massacred, one by one, in the battle's heat ; but
with pity

All thy heart had been full, if thou hadst seen what
I tell thee,—

How in the hall we lay among the wine-jars, and
under

Tables laden with food ; and how the pavement, on
all sides

Swam with blood ! And I heard the dolorous cry
of Kassandra,

Priam's daughter, whom treacherous Klytaimnestra
anear me

Slew ; and upon the ground I fell in my death-
throes, vainly

Reaching out hands to my sword, while the shame-
less woman departed,

Nor did she even stay to press her hands on my
eyelids,

No, nor to close my mouth, although I was passing
to Hades.

Oh, there is naught more dire, more insolent than
a woman

After the very thought of deeds like these has pos-
sessed her,—

One who would dare to devise an act so utterly
shameless,

Lying in wait to slay her wedded lord. I be-
thought me,

Verily, home to my children and servants giving me
welcome

Safe to return ; but she has wrought for herself
confusion

Plotting these grievous woes, and for other women
hereafter,

Even for those, in sooth, whose thoughts are set
upon goodness."

Thus he spake, and I, in turn replying, addressed
him :

"Heavens ! how from the first has Zeus the
thunderer hated,

All for the women's wiles, the brood of Atreus !
What numbers

Perished in quest of Helen,—and Klytaimnestra,
the meanwhile,

Wrought in her soul this guile for thee afar on thy
journey."

Thus I spake, and he, replying, said to me
straightway :

"See that thou art not, then, like me too mild to
thy helpmeet ;

Nor to her ear reveal each secret matter thou knowest,
Tell her the part, forsooth, and see that the rest
shall be hidden,

Nathless, not unto thee will come such murder,
Odysseus,

Dealt by a wife ; for wise indeed, and true in her
purpose,

Noble Penelope is, the child of Ikarios. Truly,
She it was whom we left, a fair young bride, when
we started

Off for the wars ; and then an infant lay at her
bosom,

One who now, methinks, in the list of men must be
seated,—

Blest indeed ! ah, yes, for his well-loved father, re-
 turning,
 Him shall behold, and the son shall clasp the sire,
 as is fitting.
 Not unto me to feast my eyes with the sight of my
 offspring
 Granted the wife of my bosom, but first of life she
 bereft me.
 Therefore I say, moreover, and charge thee well to
 remember,
 Unto thine own dear land steer thou thy vessel in
 secret,
 Not in the light ; since faith can be placed in
 woman no longer.”

THE DEATH OF AGAMEMNON.

FROM AISCHYLOS.

I.

[AISCHYLOS, *Agamemnon*, 1266-1318.*]

CHORUS—KASSANDRA—AGAMEMNON.

CHORUS.

O WRETCHED woman indeed, and O most
 wise,
 Much hast thou said ; but if thou knowest well
 Thy doom, why, like a heifer, by the Gods
 Led to the altar, tread so brave of soul ?

* Text of Paley.

KASSANDRA.

There's no escape, O friends, the time is full.

CHORUS.

Nathless, the last to enter gains in time.

KASSANDRA.

The day has come ; little I make by flight.

CHORUS.

Thou art bold indeed, and of a daring spirit !

KASSANDRA.

Such sayings from the happy none hath heard.

CHORUS.

Grandly to die is still a grace to mortals.

KASSANDRA.

Alas, my sire,—thee and thy noble brood !

(She starts back from the entrance.)

CHORUS.

How now ? What horror turns thee back again ?

KASSANDRA.

Faugh ! faugh !

CHORUS.

Why such a cry ? There's something chills thy
soul !

KASSANDRA.

The halls breathe murder,—ay, they drip with
blood.

CHORUS.

How? 'Tis the smell of victims at the hearth.

KASSANDRA.

Nay, but the exhalation of the tomb !

CHORUS.

No Syrian dainty, this, of which thou speakest.

KASSANDRA (*at the portal*).

Yet will I in the palace wail my own
And Agamemnon's fate ! Enough of life !
Alas, O friends !
Yet not for naught I quail, not as a bird
Snared in the bush : bear witness, though I die,
A woman's slaughter shall requite my own,
And, for this man ill-yoked, a man shall fall !
Thus prays of you a stranger, at death's door.

CHORUS.

Lost one, I rue with thee thy foretold doom !

KASSANDRA.

Once more I fain would utter words, once more,—
'Tis my own threne ! And I invoke the Sun,
By his last beam, that my detested foes
May pay no less to them who shall avenge me,
Than I who die an unresisting slave !

* * * * *

(*She enters the palace.*)

CHORUS.

Of Fortune was never yet enow
To mortal man ; and no one ever
Her presence from his house would sever
And point, and say, " Come no more nigh !"
Unto our King granted the Gods on high
 That Priam's towers should bow,
And homeward, crowned of Heaven, hath he come ;
But now if, for the ancestral blood that lay
At his doors, he falls,—and the dead, that cursed
 his home,
 He, dying, must in full requite,—
What manner of man is one that would not pray
 To be born with a good attendant Sprite ?

(An outcry within the palace.)

AGAMEMNON.

Woe's me ! I am stricken a deadly blow within !

CHORUS.

Hark ! Who is't cries " a blow " ? Who meets
 his death ?

AGAMEMNON.

Woe's me ! again ! a second time I am stricken !

CHORUS.

The deed, methinks, from the King's cry, is done.
Quick, let us see what help may be in counsel !

2.

[*Agamemnon*, 1343-1377.]

Enter KLYTAIMNESTRA, from the Palace.

KLYTAIMNESTRA.

Now, all this formal outcry having vent,
I shall not blush to speak the opposite.
How should one, plotting evil things for foes,
Encompass seeming friends with such a bane
Of toils? it were a height too great to leap?
Not without full prevision came, though late,
To me this crisis of an ancient feud.
And here, the deed being done, I stand—even
where
I smote him! nor deny that thus I did it,
So that he could not flee nor ward off doom.
A seamless net, as round a fish, I cast
About him, yea, a deadly wealth of robe;
Then smote him twice; and with a double cry
He loosed his limbs; and to him fallen I gave
Yet a third thrust, a grace to Hades, lord
Of the underworld and guardian of the dead.
So, falling, out he gasps his soul, and out
He spurts a sudden jet of blood, that smites
Me with a sable rain of gory dew,—
Me, then no less exulting than the field
In the sky's gift, while bursts the pregnant ear!
Things being thus, old men of Argos, joy,
If joy ye can;—I glory in the deed!
And if 'twere seemly ever yet to pour
Libation to the dead, 'twere most so now;
Most meet that one, who poured for his own home
A cup of ills, returning, thus should drain it!

CHORUS.

Shame on thy tongue ! how bold of mouth thou art
That vauntest such a speech above thy husband !'

KLYTAIMNESTRA.

Ye try me as a woman loose of soul ;
But I with dauntless heart avow to you
Well knowing—and whether ye choose to praise or
blame
I care not—this is Agamemnon ; yea,
My husband ; yea, a corpse, of this right hand,
This craftsman sure, the handiwork ! Thus stands it.

3.

[*Agamemnon*, 1466–1507.]

CHORUS—SEMI-CHORUS—KLYTAIMNESTRA.

CHORUS.

Woe ! Woe !

King ! Oh how shall I weep for thy dying ?
What shall my fond heart say anew ?
Thou in the web of the spider art lying,
Breathing out life by a death she shall rue !

SEMI-CHORUS.

Alas ! alas for this slavish couch ! By a sword
Two-edged, by a hand untrue,
Thou art smitten, even to death, my lord !

KLYTAIMNESTRA.

Thou sayest this deed was mine alone ;
But I bid thee call me not

The wife of Agamemnon's bed ;
'Twas the ancient fell Alastor* of Atreus'
throne,

The lord of a horrid feast, this crime begot,
Taking the shape that seemed the wife of the
dead,—

His sure revenge, I wot,
A victim ripe hath claimed for the young that bled.

SEMI-CHORUS.

Who shall bear witness now,—
Who of this murder, now, thee guiltless
hold ?

How sayest thou ? How ?

Yet the fell Alastor may have holpen, I trow :
Still is dark Ares driven

Down currents manifold

Of kindred blood, wherever judgment is given,
And he comes to avenge the children slain of
old,

And their thick gore cries to Heaven !

CHORUS.

Woe ! Woe !

King ! Oh how shall I weep for thy dying ?

What shall my fond heart say anew ?

Thou in the web of the spider art lying,

Breathing out life by a death she shall rue !

SEMI-CHORUS.

Alas ! alas for this slavish couch ! By a sword

Two-edged, by a hand untrue,

Thou art smitten, even to death, my lord !

* The Evil Genius, the Avenger.

KLYTAIMNESTRA.

Hath he not subtle Atè brought
Himself, to his kingly halls ?
'Twas on our own dear offspring,—yea,
On Iphigeneia, wept for still, he wrought
The doom that cried for the doom by which
he falls.
Oh, let him not in Hades boast, I say,
For 'tis the sword that calls,
Even for that foul deed, his soul away !

THE END.

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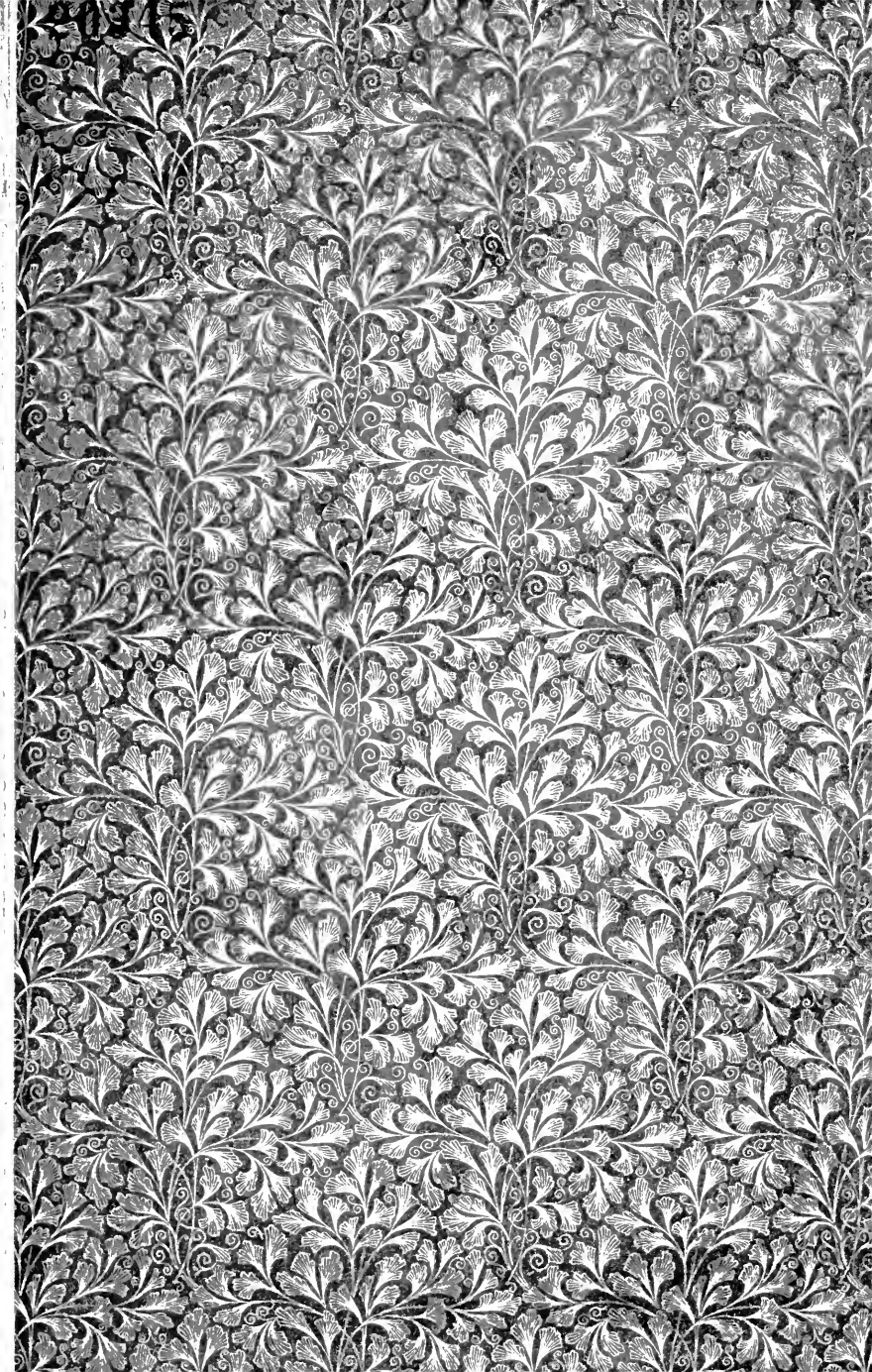
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